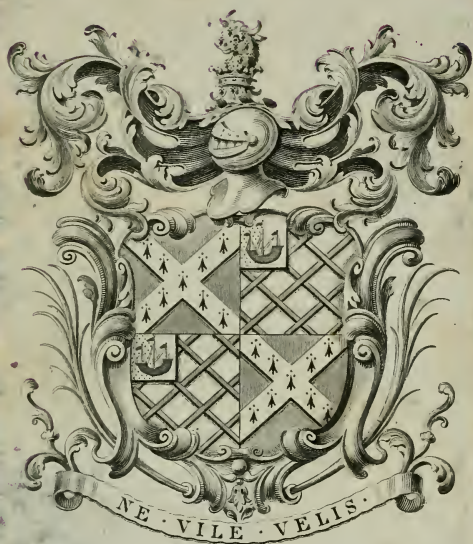
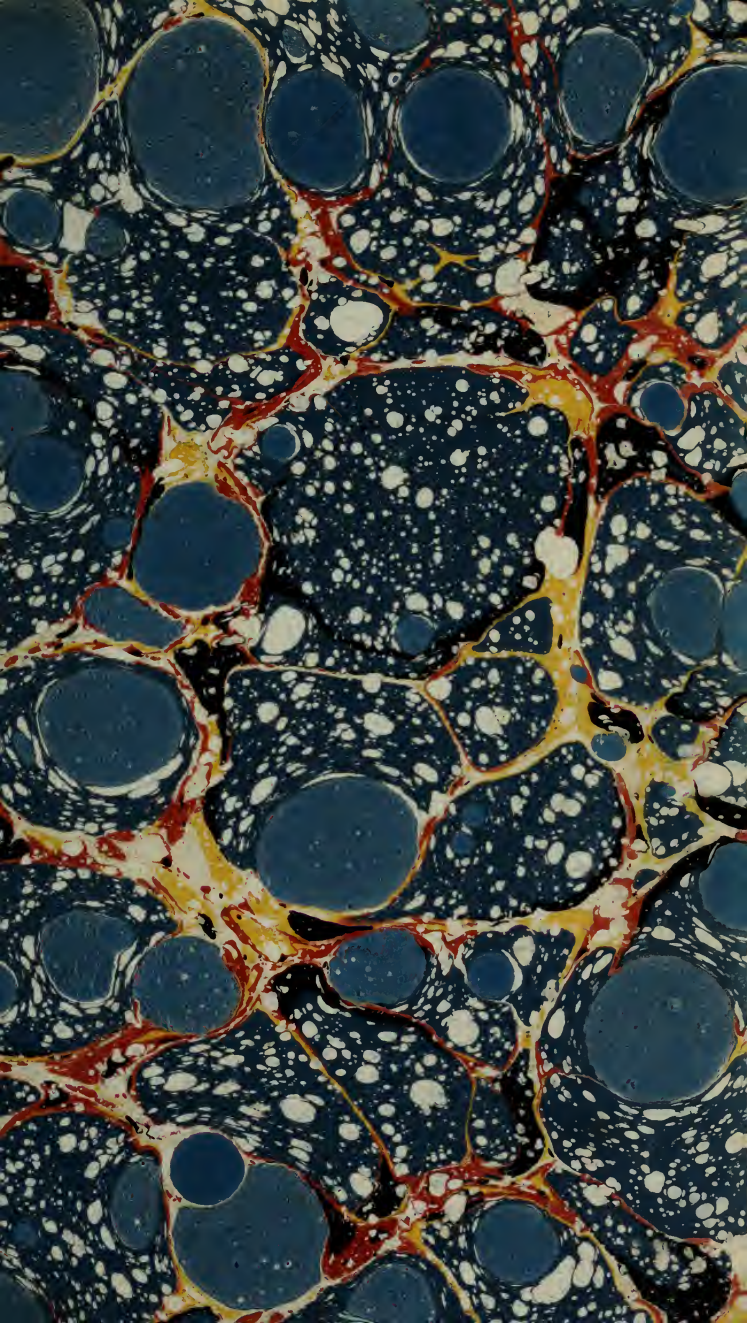


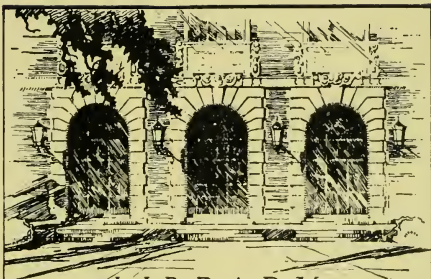


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A N N E T T E.

A TALE.

BY

WILLIAM FREDERICK DEACON,

WITH A

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

THE HON. SIR T. N. TALFOURD, D.C.L.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ANNETTE.

CHAPTER I.

HAVING successfully accomplished their escape from the palace, De Sevrac and his companion separated at the end of one of the narrow streets of the Carousel; the former being anxious to obtain news of the proceedings of the Assembly as regarded the royal family; and the latter, dejected and toil-worn, being equally desirous to seek in sleep a temporary oblivion of the horrors of the last six hours. More than once the young man was stopped by riotous parties of the *canaille*, who mistaking him in his disguise for one of themselves, compelled him to receive their congratu-

lations, and informed him, among other interesting matters, that the Assembly were busily engaged in discussing the questions of the King's dethronement and the formation of a National Convention, both which measures, they added with bursts of exultation, would be triumphantly carried before the legislative body broke up their sitting.

Having freed himself as quickly as he could from these turbulent democrats, who thronged every street and lane he passed, Alphonse at length reached his home in safety ; but, as might have been expected, he was refused admittance ; for his landlord, a steady, loyal citizen who did not trouble his head about politics, his only ambition being to live in peace and plenty, concluded from his dress that he was a *sans-culotte*. When, however, the young man made himself known, and explained the reason of his disguise, he was greeted with unfeigned kindness, and recommended to keep within doors for awhile, as, in the present irritated state of men's minds, it was most likely that for some days to come a rigorous search would be made after all aristocrats.

Alphonse thanked the worthy man for this

seasonable caution, which he promised to comply with; but too much fatigued to stay and gratify his eager curiosity respecting the attack on the Tuileries, he left him hastily and sought his own chamber, where he flung himself, dressed as he was, on the bed, and fell into an instant slumber from which — such was his mental and bodily lassitude—he did not wake till towards evening.

He then rose and made his toilette, and feeling a ravenous appetite, for it was many hours since he had tasted food, ordered some dinner to be procured for him from a neighbouring tavern; and had only just finished his meal, when his landlord entered, and with a perplexed and troubled air, told him that a person was below who was desirous to be admitted into his presence. “I gave him no answer as to whether you would see him or not,” continued the landlord, “for to say the truth, Monsieur, I don’t at all like his appearance, and strongly suspect he is one of those noisy, lawless demagogues who are keeping Paris in such a constant state of agitation to the ruin of every honest citizen’s peace of mind.”

“What can such a fellow want with me?” exclaimed De Chatillon, sharply. “Dismiss him by all means—but stay, stay,” he added, a suspicion of the truth flashing across his mind, “I can guess who he is, and what brings him here in such a disguise. It is my friend, the Count de Sevrac.”

“Oh, that alters the case,” replied the landlord, his countenance clearing up at this explanation.

“Yes, I have no doubt it is he, so you may admit him without hesitation.”

As the landlord withdrew, De Sevrac came in, and assuming an air of gaiety, singularly at variance with his haggard aspect, he said: “You see, Alphonse, I am dressed quite *à-la-mode*. There is not a more fashionable costume in all Paris than that which I have now the honour to appear in. How incomparable the pattern of this red cap! What a graceful originality in the make of this flannel-jacket! An old *poissarde* ogled me as I passed the Palais Royal on my way hither; but my virtue was proof against temptation, and I escaped with a flattering allusion to my handsome person, and a curse on my want of gallantry. You see,

therefore, it is not without reason I am vain of my costume."

"My dear Count, how can you jest at such a season?"

"For the best of all reasons, because I have nothing left but a jest. Houses—lands—rank—power—all are gone, and it were hard indeed if I were to be deprived also of the poor privilege of jesting."

"And are losses, like those you mention, fit themes for merriment?"

"None better, provided one's fancy inclines that way. While I was in a state of suspense as to the issue of affairs—indeed, while there was the slightest chance left, I was grave, scheming, and zealous enough; but now that I know the worst, nothing remains but that I submit coldly and philosophically to that worst, like the sage Memnon, in Voltaire's tale. It will be all the same a hundred years hence."

"I wish, Count, I could bring myself to regard matters with as much *sang froid* as you do," replied Alphonse, almost reproachfully.

"So you will, when you have had as much worldly experience as I have." Then putting on a more earnest air, the Count added: "Think

not, my friend, that this levity springs from the heart ; far otherwise, I but assume and encourage it in order to keep off gloomy feelings. Were I to sit down and brood over what is past and what is to come, I do verily believe I should go mad ; so by way of preventing such an unpleasant result, I force smiles into my face, fling thought to the winds, and cry ‘ *Vive la bagatelle !*’ Let others thrust themselves into corners, and sulk like school-boys, because Fortune has declared against them, I will make the best of a bad job, curse her for a jilt, and snap my fingers at her in defiance.”

“ And have you fixed on no plans for the future ?” inquired De Chatillon.

“ As far as a ruined man can be said to have any plans, it is my intention to remain concealed in Paris till the present agitation has in some degree abated, and then, either to enter the Austrian service as a volunteer, or start off for England.”

“ Why not join the emigrants at Coblenz ?”

“ Join the emigrants !” repeated De Sevrac, disdainfully, “ I would as soon join a squad of noisy old women, in the hope, by means of their tongues, of clamouring down the revolution ! As

I told you once before, there is neither talent, unanimity, nor perseverance to be found among these men. They are constantly talking of acting, but they never act ; and think to blow their enemies to atoms merely by cannonading them with protests and proclamations."

"Then why not attach yourself to the Duke of Brunswick?"

"Worse and worse. Have I not already told you that the Duke is a meddling, presumptuous blockhead, who by his late insolent and ill-timed manifesto, has done more injury to the royal cause than a dozen dukes will be able to repair in as many years?"

As Alphonse could not altogether deny the justice of this charge, he made no attempt at an answer ; whereupon the Count went on to say : "At one time I had an idea of seeing what was to be done in La Vendée, in which case you, I suppose, would have accompanied me."

"Assuredly," said De Chatillon : "it is my intention to return thither at the first opportunity."

"You must return alone, then, for the decisions of the Assembly, from whose sitting I have but now come, have caused me to change

my mind, by convincing me that no power, short of miraculous, can stay the progress of the revolution. The appointments of the Girondists, and of Danton to the ministry, seal the fate of royalty, so henceforth my career in France is ended."

"Do you really mean to say that the new administration is composed of these men?"

"I do indeed. I heard the whole debate on the subject, and never heard one in which there was less difference of opinion."

"'Twas a bold experiment; I wonder you were not discovered."

"Oh, I had no cause for apprehension, for no one was likely to detect the aristocratic Count de Sevrac in these plebeian rags; besides, I was curious to ascertain what would be said respecting the massacres at the palace, and found, as I had anticipated, that they were laid at our door. We, and the poor Swiss, were unanimously pronounced the aggressors, and the consequence is, that a verdict of condemnation has already been recorded against all the King's friends.

"How did the royal family demean themselves during this painful discussion?"

“The Queen maintained her wonted firmness and dignity, except on one occasion when the young Dauphin—who overcome by the heat, had been lying fast asleep in her lap—woke, and said a few words to her, when I could see a tear trickle down her cheek. As for her royal spouse, he was as lethargic and spiritless as he was last night when he rejected Mandat’s proposal, and occasioned the destruction of his best friends by his supineness and timidity. Indeed, he seemed to think of nothing but his appetite, and had not been long in the short-hand writers’ box when he called for something to eat, amidst the laughter of hundreds of the Deputies. Happy Louis! Fortune that has deprived him of a crown, cannot deprive him of an appetite. He eats, in spite of destiny.”

“I pity him,” said Alphonse, “and but that he is my Sovereign, should despise him.”

“Is? Was, you should say! His kingdom has departed from him, and ere long we shall have a republic proclaimed, with Brissot, or Pétion, or Danton, for a first President.”

“Then it is high time that I quit Paris, and with my father and the rest of the seigneurs, try to rouse the monarchical spirit of La Vendée.”

“ Dreams—idle dreams : but do as you please. For my part, I am sick of fighting the battles of monarchs who will not fight for themselves, more especially when nothing is to be got by it, but hard blows.”

There was something in these words that jarred strangely on De Chatillon’s feelings ; he took no notice of them, however, and the Count proceeded to say : “ ’Tis the height of folly to cling to the vessel when she is going to pieces on the breakers ; in such a state of things every sensible man will abandon her to her fate, and make for the shore as best he may. Were there the remotest prospect of success for royalty, I would venture upon one more struggle ; but as it is, I shall rest contented with the sacrifices I have already made.”

“ There is prudence at any rate in your resolution,” observed Alphonse, coldly ; “ but I should have hoped that your sense of honour and duty—”

“ Honour and duty !” interrupted the Count, with an ironical laugh, “ bah ! They are mere specious, tricky phrases, invented by knaves to tickle the ears of fools. Divest honour of its quixotic associations, and interpret it in a com-

mon-sense spirit, and what more does it mean than the will, backed by the power, to obtain rank, wealth, dominion above your fellow-creatures? Regard duty in the same sound, sober light, and all that it implies, is the art of keeping a firm hold of the worldly advantages that honour has secured for you. I have no fancy for volunteer martyrdom—no notion of laying my head under the axe of the guillotine, merely in order that it may be said of me, when I am six feet deep in the earth, and deaf alike to praise and censure, that I died nobly in the glorious cause of honour and duty! Such flights of chivalrous heroism are far above my capacity; and if you take my advice, Alphonse, you, too, will rid yourself of these romantic and—under existing circumstances—ruinous crotchets as quickly as possible; return home; keep a still tongue in your head; take matters as you find them; and leave royalty to shift for itself.”

“Never!” replied the high-minded young man, with impetuosity: “so long as I can wield a sword, that sword shall be wielded in defence of the rightful monarchy of France. That it is now beset with perils, is so far from damping, that it increases my ardour in its cause. Count

de Sevrac," he added, while his cheek flushed with the generous emotions of his nature ; "you shall hear of me before long, and regret, when too late, that you had not cast your lot with those gallant spirits whom my father's seignioral example shall soon rouse to arms in every quarter of La Vendée. I go to fight in their ranks—to win renown, if not by my military skill, at least by my zeal—and to conquer or die, as becomes the ancient name I bear."

"Truly ; a Vendean crusade against the revolution is a very grand idea," said the Count, drily ; "what a pity it is so utterly impracticable !"

"Yet, impracticable as it is, you yourself cherished it with ardour not a year since."

"I did so ; but times are altered since then, and what twelve months ago was a bold, sagacious scheme, is now become the wildest—the most visionary chimera."

"And was it to tell me this—to bid me abandon a principle which I hold dearer than life, and make my peace with rebels and anarchists, that you sought me out to-night ? For shame, Count ; from you, of all men, I should least have expected such counsel !"

“Alphonse,” replied De Sevrac, in a sadder tone of voice than he had yet spoken, “my sole object in coming here was to bid you farewell ; but while conversing with you for the last time, how could I do otherwise than warn you, as a friend, how you peril life and fortune in a cause which no human power can longer uphold ?”

“I thank you for your advice, for I am sure it was well meant, although the tone was something ungracious—but let that pass ; when do you propose quitting the country ?”

“Immediately the present search after the aristocrats has relaxed. Till then, I shall lie concealed at the house of a faithful old family domestic in the faubourg St. Antoine, whom I hunted out on quitting the palace this morning, and by whose means I trust to effect my escape, with the poor remains of my fortune. Do not ask my address, or expect me to visit you again ; for depend on it, that to maintain any further intercourse with each other, is to involve ourselves in certain ruin. One word more : do nothing rashly, but weigh well this bold and—as I still must take leave to call it—romantic scheme of yours, before you finally commit yourself. Remember, our first duty is to our

own necks; our second, to our country. Patriotism"—this was said with a slight sneer—"is, doubtless, a very fine thing, but for all its imposing air, it cuts but a ridiculous figure when its severed head rolls, like a foot-ball, into the basket of the guillotine;" and before Alphonse could reply to these supercilious remarks—the promptings of disappointed ambition—the Count had left his presence.

CHAPTER II.

FOR many days following the Count de Sevrac's visit, Alphonse kept himself rigidly secluded within doors—a matter of imperative necessity, for the number of arrests of persons charged with being aristocrats increased daily, and the spies of the Jacobins and other popular factions were abroad in all quarters. From time to time his good-natured landlord would come up and have a gossip with him, and the public journals, which he never failed to read, informed him of the progress which events were making. Meanwhile, his mind became a prey to anxiety, which his retired mode of life tended greatly to increase. The long protracted silence of his father and the Delilles filled him with appre-

hensions, and he had more than once seen in the papers accounts of popular disturbances along the frontier line of the Bocage, nearest Nantes.

Thus beset by alarms and disquietudes, he resolved at all hazards to quit Paris, for his present inglorious life grew hourly more irksome, and every day seemed now wasted that was not actively devoted to the cause of royalty. Dreams of coming glory, too, began to haunt him "like a passion." For the first time, he seriously meditated the possibility of making a successful stand against the encroachments of democracy; felt his heart leap exultingly at the idea of achieving renown in arms; and no longer the reserved, contemplative youth, started up the sanguine, energetic man of action. These fervid and generous aspirations received their last stirring impulse from his happening to hear one afternoon, as he sate reading in his solitary apartment, the hawkers of the daily papers bawling in the streets: "Great news!—Rising in La Vendée!—Conflict between the peasantry and the constitutional troops!"

"Rising in La Vendée!" muttered Alphonse in impatient tones; "my father, perhaps, fore-

most in the insurrection, and the Delilles in danger at Nantes, and I remain here a close—some might add—a voluntary prisoner, not daring to stir hand or foot! Out upon such abject caution! Be the risk of discovery what it may, I will set forth to-morrow for my native province; for if the monarchy is yet to be saved, it is there that its battles must be fought.”

His mind fully bent on this project, De Chatillon, dressed in the same plebeian disguise he had worn on escaping from the Tuileries, sallied forth next morning at an early hour, to the house of the banker, Delaborde, who, he well knew, would furnish him with all the funds he required for his journey. On his way, he was much struck with the unusual gloom and anxiety that pervaded the countenance of almost every individual he met. Groups were conversing together in every street, and though some were talking loudly and angrily, yet the majority seemed as if palsied with fear. Eager to know what could be the cause of such apprehension among people who hitherto had been all daring confidence, Alphonse stopped a decent-looking mechanic who was passing at

the time, and assuming, as well as he could, the air and language of a democrat, inquired if any fresh tidings had arrived from the armies on the frontier.

"Tidings enough—and to spare," replied the man "About an hour ago news arrived of the taking of Longwy by the Prussians. The Assembly are now discussing the matter, and I understand that by Danton's advice they are going to proclaim the country in danger."

This intelligence took Alphonse quite by surprize, and the other misinterpreting the cause of his visible emotion, said: "'Tis sad news, citizen; but courage—courage! France will yet show herself capable of beating back the invaders."

"Right, my friend; let us never despair of our country," replied De Chatillon, and proceeded on at a brisk pace to his banker's, whom he found chatting in his office with one or two clerks. At first, as he anticipated, Delaborde really mistook him for what he appeared to be; but the sound of his voice quickly undeceived him, and addressing him in that careless, off-hand manner in which a wealthy banker might be supposed to address an inferior, he bade him

walk into an inner room, and wait there until he should have leisure to speak with him; and having thus screened him from observation, he dismissed one of his clerks on some unimportant errand, and directing the other to examine certain accounts for which he pretended he should have immediate occasion, he went into the adjoining apartment, and carefully closed the door after him.

“My God, Monsieur de Chatillon,” exclaimed Delaborde, “how is it that I see you, of all men, here to-day? I understood, when I last saw you, that it was your intention to return home without further loss of time. Why did you not do so? Surely you must be aware that your life is in danger while you remain in Paris; and that I, known though I am to Roland and many of the other authorities, am compromised by keeping up a connexion with you!”

When Alphonse explained the reasons that had detained him so long in Paris, the banker shrugged his shoulders, and replied, with a look of mingled pity and contempt: “Ay, ay, ’tis precisely what I expected. How could you be so rash as to mix yourself up with court in-

trigues? If you must have joined a party, why did you not join the winning one? I told you, when you first called on me, what would be the result of such folly, and now you see I was right. Well, I suppose we must not be too hard on you, though I must own, my young friend, that your indifference to my counsels, gives me but a poor opinion of your common sense. And now what do you want? Money, of course. You shall have it; but once more let me advise you, as a matter of business, to leave Paris the first favourable opportunity; though how you are to get away is the question, for the police are everywhere on the alert; and this news of the taking of Longwy, which I heard only a few minutes ago, will make them look sharper after the aristocrats than ever. It is a wonder how you have escaped so long."

"It is true then that Longwy has surrendered to the Prussians!" exclaimed Alphonse, noticing only that part of Delaborde's speech which had made any impression on him.

"There can be no reason to doubt it, I fear; and they do say that there is some talk of closing the barriers, for eight-and-forty hours, in order to prevent suspected persons quitting the city."

“Closing the barriers!” rejoined Alphonse, with a countenance of sore dismay, “then my last hope of escape is cut off!”

“Gently, gently, my young friend; I did not state as a positive fact that the barriers were to be closed, but only that there was a rumour to that effect. The truth is, the late accounts from La Vendée have impressed people with the belief that a vast royalist conspiracy is hatching in the provinces, and that the aristocrats now in Paris are closely connected with it.”

“God grant that the belief be well-founded!” exclaimed Alphonse, with energy, “and that ere many days have elapsed, I may have the opportunity of joining my brave Vendean brothers in arms!”

“Hey, what’s this—what’s this you say?” replied the astounded banker: “join the conspirators in La Vendée? Oh Lord, oh Lord! the poor young man is mad—mad as a March hare! Who ever yet heard of such extraordinary notions of business! Join the conspirators! Join the devil, for he’s quite as safe a colleague. Why, I shall hear of your being hanged to a lamp-post at Nantes, thrown neck and heels into the Loire, or beheaded by the guillotine, before

you are a month older. However, it's no affair of mine ; but remember this, Monsieur de Châtillon, I sanction no such doings ; as a plain, practical man, and your well-wisher, I set my face decidedly against them. They are against all law ; and being so, they are against common sense."

" My good friend," said Alphonse, calmly, " I care nothing for law when it is at variance with justice and honour."

" Hush—hush !" rejoined the discreet, methodical man of business : " if you must talk nonsense, pray talk it in a lower key, or you may be overheard in the office. Join the conspirators ! Join a set of desperate adventurers, who, I'll be bound to say, have hardly a franc in their pockets, or a shirt on their backs ! Young man, young man, I cannot choose but feel for you, even while I reprobate your egregious folly. Were you aught but what you are, my old friend and patron's son, I would at once denounce you as a rebel to the government ; but as it is, you are safe for me. Join the conspirators ! Mercy on us, did ever mortal man hear of such a scheme for getting on in life !"

Delaborde, who loved to hear himself talk,

went on in this strain till he had fairly exhausted all he had to say ; when he suddenly reflected that it was his duty, as a man of common sense, to get rid of his dangerous visitor without delay ; and having furnished him with the sums he demanded—protesting strenuously, while he did so, against his applying them to any other than legitimate purposes—the prudent banker took a formal leave of Alphonse, who repaired to the house of Servette's, by whose influence with Roland and the other ministers, he hoped to be enabled to pass the barriers, either that night or early the next day, without molestation.

As ill-luck would have it, Servette was absent from home ; and as his servant could not tell where he was, or when he would return, De Chatillon went into his study, there to await his arrival. But hour after hour passed, and still he did not make his appearance, upon which, despairing of seeing him that day, and concluding that he was engaged with some one or other of his party, Alphonse left a letter for him, stating that he would visit him on the morrow, as he was anxious to consult him on a matter of great personal moment.

Having carefully sealed this note, and placed

it within the folds of a volume of Montesquieu, that was lying open on the desk, so that Servette would be sure to see it on his return, Alphonse retraced his steps homewards; and his landlord, who seemed to have been on the look-out for him, barely allowed him time to gain his apartment ere he presented himself at the door, looking unusually perplexed and agitated.

“What is the matter?” inquired De Chatillon, observing the man’s perturbation: “has anything unpleasant occurred during my absence?”

“Oh, Monsieur de Chatillon,” replied the landlord, casting his eyes confusedly on the ground, “forgive what I am going to say, but indeed I cannot help it. It is my misfortune, not my fault, for you cannot wonder at a decent, orderly citizen like me, wishing to save himself and family from ruin!”

“Assuredly not; but in what way am I connected with your ruin?”

“Have you not heard that the Minister of Justice has ordered that domiciliary visits be paid to every house whose owner is not known to be a democrat, and that the search is to commence this very night?”

“And you are anxious, in consequence, that I should leave you this instant,” replied Alphonse, affecting a composure which he was far from feeling, for the news had greatly shocked him, “lest you be imprisoned for harbouring an aristocrat? Speak out, man; is it not so?”

“I cannot deny that such is my wish,” said the landlord, but in such low and broken accents as indicated a severe struggle between his self-interest and his sense of shame, “though it is with the greatest pain I tell you so; for you have been an excellent lodger, always punctual in your payments, never giving unnecessary trouble, never—”

“And by way of showing your sense of my merits,” interrupted Alphonse, testily, “you are resolved to turn me out of your house!”

This taunt went to the heart of the timid but kindly-natured landlord. “Heaven help me!” he exclaimed, “for I know not what to do, nor what to say. Interest urges me one way; humanity another. Willingly—most willingly would I let you remain here; but should you be discovered, it is more than probable that the authorities would imprison me as well as yourself; and then what would become of my wife, and my poor

little Angelique ? 'Tis no use talking, Monsieur de Chatillon ; you must leave me within the hour. I am sure no man can respect another more than I do you ; nevertheless, one must look to oneself, and having hitherto kept aloof from all political disputes, I cannot—”

“ There is no need to add another word. You desire me to leave you, and I will do so ; but, remember, by driving me from your house when I have no other place of refuge to fly to, you consign an innocent fellow-creature, whom you say you respect, to immediate and inevitable destruction. Think—ask yourself the question—is this grateful, is it generous, is it consistent with common humanity ? If your conscience acquits you, I have done.”

“ I cannot do it,” muttered the landlord, in a voice almost inarticulate from emotion. “ He was always a gentle, well-behaved youth, without an atom of aristocratic pride in his nature, and whenever he met my little Angelique on the stairs, he made a point of stopping and saying a kind word to her. She likes him—my wife likes him—we all like him—no, I cannot do it, by God ! Monsieur de Chatillon, for this one night you are welcome to such shelter as my

house may afford; there is no reason why I should be suspected more than my neighbours—or indeed, why I should be visited at all; for, now I come to think of it, Pétion knows me to be a harmless, discreet citizen: so, should the worst befall, his good word will go a great way in my favour. But to-morrow, Monsieur—”

“To-morrow,” said Alphonse, interrupting him, “I will relieve you from all suspense, for I would not willingly bring a good man into trouble; indeed, I would leave you this minute, were I not sure that for this night, at least, we shall neither of us be molested. But to-morrow, as you say, our turn may come, in which case it will be but just that I disembarass you of my presence.”

“I thank you for your consideration, Monsieur de Chatillon,” replied the landlord; “and trust that here and elsewhere you may have the good fortune to escape the clutches of the police,” saying which he withdrew, in a serener frame of mind than when he entered the apartment.

CHAPTER III.

THE landlord's fears were not without foundation, for towards midnight, while Alphonse, by way of beguiling uneasy reflections, was employing himself in making extracts from the plays of his favourite Corneille, the roll of a drum was heard in the street, and next, a loud knocking at the door.

The terrified landlord, too well aware of the cause of this clamour, jumped out of bed, hustled on his clothes, and throwing up his chamber-window, exclaimed in a tremulous voice:

“ Who's there ?”

“ The officers of the Committee of Surveillance,” was the startling reply.

“ And what is your object in coming here at this late hour, Messieurs ?”

“To search for and apprehend suspected persons.”

“But I have no such persons in this house.”

“So you say, but we have reason to think otherwise ; so open the door, or we’ll break it open.”

Conscious that he had no alternative but to obey this peremptory summons, the landlord went down and admitted the strangers, who proved to be two commissioners, of the commune, who on their entrance began subjecting him to a strict examination.

“You are the owner of this house ?” said the elder of the two officials.

“I am.”

“And you let out a portion of it in lodgings?”

“Such is my general practice,” rejoined the agitated landlord ; “but I have no lodgers now—that is to say—” and he stopped, not knowing how to conclude the sentence.

“You look confused, citizen,” observed his interrogator, fixing a penetrating glance upon him.

“Because I am only just roused from sleep,” replied the landlord, trying hard to put a bold face on the matter.

“And that, I suppose, is why his teeth chatter

so!" remarked the younger commissioner, with a malicious smile.

"Oh, that is the cold, Monsieur—nothing else, I assure you. What should I be afraid of, who am known to the Mayor, Pétion, as a steady, quiet, hard-working man?"

"So far is in your favour, citizen," replied the elder commissioner; "still, you will do well to bear in mind that we are empowered to arrest all, whether friends of Pétion, or not, who do not state the whole truth in their declarations. Now, what lodgers have you at this moment?"

"Only one," exclaimed the landlord, "and he leaves me to-morrow; and a more prudent, peaceable young man—"

"Enough—his name?"

"His name? Why really I almost—oh, his name, you mean? Well, if you must know, it is De Chatillon."

"Humph! An aristocrat, I'll be bound. Write down his name," said the commissioner, addressing his junior colleague, who forthwith proceeded to inscribe it with a pencil on a narrow slip of paper which he held in his hand. "Now conduct us to his apartments," pursued the first speaker.

“Is this absolutely necessary?” inquired the landlord, anxious to delay the search as long as he could, in order that Alphonse might have time to conceal himself. “If he be within, he has most likely retired to rest, being, as I said before, an orderly, well-conducted young—”

“Lead on, citizen,” interrupted the elder commissioner, sharply; “the orders of the Committee are imperative.”

Finding the officers thus resolutely bent on a search, the landlord left the passage where the foregoing dialogue had been carried on, and slowly and unwillingly led the way to Alphonse’s rooms.

The loud knocking at the door, which had so frightened his landlord, had not been heard with less anxiety by De Chatillon, who, suspecting the cause, started up from the table at which he had been writing, and after hunting about for some secure hiding-place, ensconced himself in a deep, narrow closet, where he usually kept his books; the door of which, being of the same colour as the wall, was, he thought, not unlikely to escape detection. He had barely time to shut himself up in this convenient little nook, when the party entered,

and the commissioners commenced a search under the sofa, behind the window-curtains, up the chimney—indeed, in every place where they supposed it probable a man would conceal himself. In the eager hurry of their proceedings, however, the closet escaped their notice, and they went to Alphonse's sleeping-room, where they were not more successful in their search.

“You see, Messieurs,” exclaimed the landlord, who guessed where his lodger was, “the young man has not yet returned. The bed has evidently not been touched since it was made this morning.”

“But it is not likely he is abroad on such a night as this; he must be somewhere in the house.”

“I have told you what I think, Messieurs, and now leave you to take your own course,” said the landlord, doggedly.

“We shall certainly report the matter to the commune,” observed the senior officer; “but before we go, we will take the liberty of examining the rest of the house;” and without further ceremony, they visited every part of the premises, not omitting even the landlord's bed-chamber, to the huge indignation of his

wife, who being something of a termagant, and annoyed, besides, at the protracted absence of her husband, let fly such a volley of reproaches at the commissioners, that they were glad to make their escape back to Alphonse's sitting-room, which they were about quitting, after a second ineffectual examination, when one of them happening to take up from the table a sheet of writing-paper, perceived a heavy blot on it, the ink of which was not yet quite dry. Turning directly to the landlord, who grew as pale as death at this unexpected discovery, he said: "You told us that your lodger was not within; here is a proof that he has been writing here within the last quarter of an hour."

"I told you, Messieurs, what I really thought, for I can have no possible interest either in deceiving you, or shielding him," replied the bewildered landlord.

"That will not satisfy us," rejoined the elder commissioner; "if you do not produce this concealed person, or tell us where we may find him, you shall go to prison in his stead. If, on the contrary, you give him up to us, we promise you that you shall not be further molested."

"On this condition I surrender myself,"

exclaimed Alphonse, throwing open the closet-door, and advancing close up to the commissioners. "I am he you seek; my name is De Chatillon. Now, remember, this innocent man is to receive no further molestation."

"We will abide by our promise," said the chief officer, so soon as he had recovered from the astonishment occasioned by Alphonse's sudden appearance; "but for you, Monsieur, you must accompany us to the Bicêtre, for your concealment affords undeniable proof that you are not unjustly suspected." And without deigning to listen to the entreaties of the worthy landlord, who prayed that they would let the young man go, for he was guiltless of any participation in conspiracy against the people, the commissioners led him away between them. They conducted him to a *fiacre* which was in waiting at the corner of the street, and which conveyed them to the Bicêtre. Here they were received by the under-jailer, in whom, at the very first glance, the prisoner recognized his old acquaintance, Jacques; who, though he started on seeing his former master's friend in such a condition, took no further notice of him; which Alphonse interpreted into a hint

that he did not desire their connexion should be known, and abstained from all recognition.

Having delivered the prisoner into Jacques's hands, and seen him consigned to a solitary dungeon, the only furniture of which consisted of a damaged oak table and a single wicker chair, the commissioners took their departure, not, however, before they had seen the door locked and bolted on their captive : a duty which Jacques performed with great apparent good-will, but in reality with as much reluctance as if he had been turning the key on one of his own nearest relatives.

Left alone in this gloomy dungeon, Alphonse abandoned himself to the most painful ruminations. He had little hope of escape should he be brought to trial, for at a season of general ferment like the present, he felt persuaded that his plebeian disguise, his attempt at concealment, even his very name, would be converted into proofs that he was an aristocrat, and one of the King's defenders on the fatal 10th. Then, rushed over his mind the thoughts of his father fighting at the head of his brave retainers in La Vendée, and—what, perhaps, touched him still nearer—of Annette Delille, exposed,

with no other protector than a timid parent, to the revolutionary fury of the mob at Nantes. "And I remain here!" exclaimed Alphonse, aloud, "unable to defend her, and destined to perish ingloriously on the scaffold, instead of on the battle-field, like so many of my heroic ancestors!" The thought of these things fairly unmanned De Chatillon, and leaning his head on the table, he burst into a passion of tears.

But this was a momentary weakness; soon a manlier spirit prevailed. Hastily brushing the moisture from his eyes, as if ashamed of having been betrayed into such sensibility, he rose and examined his cell in all directions, in order to ascertain if a chance of escape remained. Alas, he was but too soon convinced that escape was hopeless! The room contained but one small window, which was within a yard of the ceiling, and thick, heavy bars of iron were fixed across it, to remove which, destitute as he was of all fitting implements, was clearly impossible. "There is no help for it," he said half-aloud, as he sullenly resumed his seat: "my doom is fixed, and I shall quit this dungeon only for the scaffold, unless indeed—" and the idea flashed across him like a sudden

blaze of sunlight—"I can contrive to interest Jacques in my favour. Fickle, pusillanimous, vain as the fellow is, he has yet a good heart; and if I can but succeed in awakening his better feelings, no doubt he will befriend me to the utmost of his ability;" and thus, in some degree reassured, Alphonse waited patiently the approach of day-light.

It came at length, and with it came Jacques, who, after depositing on the table a scanty portion of coarse prison food, which was intended to serve as breakfast, was about quitting the cell without taking the slightest notice of the captive, when the latter addressed him with: "Jacques, can you bear to leave your master's old friend without a word of ordinary kindness? Were our cases reversed, I would not do so, but would strain every nerve to rescue him from certain death."

"Monsieur de Chatillon," replied Jacques, in a whisper, "I cannot—dare not do aught to assist you, for I am under the control of the head-jailer, who is a rough and unfeeling man, and exacts a rigid account of my time. This is the reason why I have till now forborne

to address you. I dreaded to crush every hope of escape you might have cherished."

"But surely, my good fellow—"

"I must not stop to talk with you, for the very walls have ears in this hateful place," and approaching close on tip-toe to Alphonse, Jacques whispered, in a still lower tone: "you have no cause to alarm yourself; there are numbers of aristocrats confined in this prison, against whom nothing more positive can be urged than against yourself; and they all think—and so do I for aught that appears to the contrary—that in a few days, when things have settled down a little, they will be liberated. Should danger, however, await you, rest satisfied that I will give you timely information; more, I cannot say, or I may be discovered, and another appointed in my place," and with these words, in spite of all Alphonse's entreaties that he would stay, he turned, and quitted the dungeon.

As he heard the key turn in the rusty lock, the captive's heart again sunk within him. Jacques, it was but too plain, could do nothing for him; and if he could, his fears would

incapacitate him from rendering any effectual succour. Nevertheless, he would make a second, and more stirring appeal to his feelings ; for, cheerless as was his condition, his good sense told him that it was never too late to abandon himself to despair.

Slowly the dull, dreary day crawled on, and the gradual withdrawal of the imperfect light that forced, as it were, its reluctant way in at the window, announced that noon was passed, and that twilight was settling down upon earth. For hours and hours together, Alphonse had had no other occupation than pacing the chill stone floor of his cell, thinking, now of his father, now of the Delilles, and now of the heroic Queen who, with her husband and her children, had been just transferred to the prison of the Temple. The course of his meditations was diverted by the sound of loud, harsh voices in the passage leading to his dismal abode ; and shortly afterwards Jacques entered, bearing, as before, a small basket of provisions in his hand. His look was one of horror, such as befitted the communication he came to make. "I told you," he began, "that I would give you warning when I thought there was danger,

and I am here to fulfil my promise. I fear much, Monsieur de Chatillon, that some secret and cruel measures are being projected against the aristocrats in all the prisons, for about two hours ago—hush ! I thought I heard a step in the passage ; no, it was mere fancy—as I was saying, a short while ago, the head-jailer sent away his wife and children for the night, and no sooner were they gone, than eight or ten armed men came in, and are at this moment drinking together in the strong room. I know them well, for they belong to our secret society, and I know also that they will not hesitate to commit the greatest crimes at the command of their employers.”

“Then I have no longer the shadow of a hope.”

“Not so,” replied Jacques, with more boldness than he had yet shown.

“Will you assist me to escape, then ?” asked Alphonse, eagerly, “will you indeed stand my friend on this occasion ? Do so, and depend on my fervent — my lasting gratitude. Oh, Jacques, show me that you sincerely regret your behaviour to the Count de Sevrac, by protecting the most intimate associate he has left !”

“Monsieur de Chatillon,” replied Jacques, “I cannot assist you to escape from this prison ; for were your absence to be discovered, my death would be the immediate consequence. But granting that you were to succeed in quitting your cell, you could never get beyond the passage, for several of the municipal authorities are assembled in a room that commands a view of the whole court-yard, and a detachment of the National Guard keep vigilant watch at the gates. Trust me, this scheme of yours is utterly impracticable.”

“Jacques—Jacques !” exclaimed the stentorian voice of the head-jailer from the further end of the passage, “Sacré diable !—Where is the lazy dog ?”

“I must leave you, Monseigneur,” muttered Jacques, “but I will return as soon as I can,” and locking and bolting the door of the cell with a great parade of caution, he went away, whistling with as much composure as he could command, a verse or two of the Marseillaise.

Within the hour he returned, but short as was the interval, it seemed to Alphonse’s impatient spirit quite an age. “The head-jailer,” said Jacques, “wanted to consult the prison

register, which he had mislaid, and fancied might be in my possession. I know nothing of it, however, so after setting me to search for it all over the Bicêtre, he has now gone to look for it himself; and while he is thus occupied, I have slipped in here again to tell you that I have obtained permission to go out for an hour or two this evening, and therefore if you know of any friend who is willing to assist you, speak but the word, and I will make a point of calling on him, and acquainting him with your exact situation. This is what I meant when I hinted that you had a chance of escape. It is the only means I have of serving you."

"Alas! if this be my only chance, I fear it is but a desperate one. Yet surely Roland might be induced to befriend me! I was always kindly welcomed at his *soirées*, and once he was pleased to—but why do I speak of him, when he has most likely long since forgotten me? But Servette—my old friend and tutor—can nothing be done with him? He must—he cannot but be in high favour with the ministry, and I much mistake him, if he do not make a strenuous effort to save me from destruction. Jacques," added Alphonse, raising

his voice, "I embrace your offer of service : go and find out M. Servette ; he lives nearly opposite Roland's, in the Rue St. Jacques, and will be sure to grant you an interview if you say that you come from me. Tell him how imminent is my danger, and that if he stirs at all in my behalf, he must do so without the slightest delay."

"I will—I will," replied Jacques, eagerly, "and if he have influence with Roland, and through him, with Danton, you may yet be saved," and without another word, he set forth on his errand.

"You are the jailer of the Bicêtre, I believe," exclaimed a tall, middle-aged person, dressed in the uniform of a superior officer of the National Guard, who accosted Jacques as he was making his way across the court-yard of the prison.

"No, I am only the under-jailer," was the reply.

"No matter—what prisoners have you?"

"I cannot tell the number, but the Bicêtre is full of them."

"Have you," continued the stranger, with a look of eager curiosity, "have you an aristocrat by name De Chatillon within your walls?"

“Yes,” replied Jacques, but not without embarrassment, for he knew not whether he was speaking to a friend or an enemy of the young man.

But his doubts were soon removed, for the stranger, while a fierce gleam of vengeance shot from his eyes, said: “Take heed to his motions, and be sure you do not let him escape. I shall visit him myself to-night in his cell, in order that I may be able to swear to his identity, and in the interim I make you responsible for his safe custody; again I say, keep a vigilant eye on him, fellow, or your own life shall answer for having connived at the escape of a dangerous royalist,” and he haughtily waved his hand as a sign for Jacques to pass on.

It was past eight o’clock, and Servette was at work in his study, when word was brought him that a person was at the door who wished to speak with him on a matter of urgent moment.

“To speak with me!” said Servette, looking up from his papers at the servant who brought the message. “Who can it be? Some one from Roland, perhaps, about the article in yesterday’s journal. Bid him come in.”

Forthwith Jacques entered, and in a few hurried words explained to the astonished old man who he was; the dangerous predicament in which Alphonse was placed; and his request that he would exert whatever influence he might have with the ministers to extricate him from it; adding, "Whatever is done, must be done quickly, for as perhaps you know, Monsieur Servette, there are strange rumours afloat respecting the prisons, where it is said that the aristocrats are conspiring—"

"Bless my soul!" interrupted Servette, "how remiss have I been in not inquiring before now after my old pupil! I should have known that his stay in Paris was attended with danger—and his note, too, which he left here a short time since—really I am much to blame in having taken no notice of it; but I was so engrossed with other matters that I quite forgot all about it. Perish, Alphonse perish! God in heaven forbid! You tell me, fellow, that you are the under-jailer of the Bicêtre; well, go back immediately, and bid your prisoner keep up a stout heart, for I will not lose a moment's time in endeavouring to procure an order for his liberation. Let me see," continued the

kind old man, when Jacques had quitted his sight, "who is the fittest person to apply to? Roland? Alas! I fear he can be of no use, for it is Danton who is all-powerful now, and he has no great liking for our party; however, I can but try the Home Minister, for he, at least, will refuse me nothing:" and snatching up his hat, he posted off to Roland's, whom he found on the eve of setting out to a cabinet council.

On stating the object of his visit, and reminding the minister that De Chatillon was a young intelligent aristocrat, who had often frequented his *soirées*, Roland made answer: "I remember the youth well, and would gladly befriend him, if only for your sake; but you must be aware that I have no control in a case of this sort. Danton is the proper person to apply to, for as Minister of Justice, the municipal authorities look to him only for directions."

"But will not a written order from you weigh with the jailers of the Bicêtre?"

"Not at all, I have no authority there: you must prefer your request to Danton, and though you will find him rough in manner, yet he will treat you courteously, if you mention that you come from me. But I cannot stop to say

more, for my colleagues are awaiting my presence."

Though he had expected such an answer, yet it was not without a feeling of deep dejection that Servette listened to the confirmation of his worst fears. He was resolved, however, not to succumb to despair, but boldly to face Danton, and not lose sight of him so long as the faintest hope remained of being able to incline his heart to mercy. It was a difficult game to play, for the Minister of Justice was well-known as a man of ruthless nature; and few were ever admitted to an interview with him, who did not feel as if a load were removed from their minds, the instant they had quitted his presence.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Servette reached the hôtel of the Minister of Justice, he found it in a state of considerable bustle. A small body of the National Guard was posted at the entrance, for the purpose of maintaining order among the crowd who were incessantly clamouring for their idol, Danton, to make his appearance among them ; couriers with sealed despatches for the provinces, were hurrying to and fro ; and several officers of the municipality, wearing their official scarfs, were standing in an ante-room leading to the chamber of audience, conversing eagerly together in a hurried and mysterious tone.

To one of these last Servette addressed himself, requesting to know whether he could be

admitted to the presence of the Minister of Justice, as he had business with him of the most urgent nature.

“ I fear you will not be able to see him to-night,” was the answer given by the municipal officer to whom the old man applied.

“ But I must see him, for I come with a message from the Minister of the Interior which demands an immediate reply.”

While Servette was speaking, a door opened, and one of Danton's private secretaries came in, having just quitted the audience hall ; and before he could close the door again, the great man was heard speaking in those loud, menacing tones which had so often electrified the Assembly and the clubs.

This was an omen of ill import, but Servette would not allow himself to be discouraged by it, and stopping the secretary as he was crossing the ante-room, he entreated him to go back and acquaint Danton that a stranger desired an interview with him relative to a matter of pressing moment. Struck by the singular earnestness of his manner, the secretary complied, though not without reluctance ; and the old man awaited his return in a state of the most torturing sus-

pense. Ten minutes elapsed, each of which appeared an hour, and still no answer was returned to his supplication ; at length the door of the audience-chamber was again opened, and the secretary beckoned Servette to enter, who hastily pressed forward, and found himself in the presence of the dreaded chief !

Danton was standing near the door, talking to a gentleman with whom, apparently, he had had a sharp dispute, for a frown still hung upon his brow ; and on seeing Servette, he looked sternly at him, as much as to say, “ what business have you here ? ” but when the latter mentioned the name of Roland, Danton motioned him to a seat, and then continued his conversation in an under-tone with the stranger.

The Minister of Justice—strange appointment for such a man to hold !—was at this period in the very flower of his manhood. He was of colossal stature and athletic build ; and his features, which were harsh, large, and disagreeable, expressed infinite audacity and determination of purpose, “ half disguised ” — says Madame Roland in her “ Memoirs ” — “ by a jovial air, and an affectation of frankness and simplicity.” His voice was of prodigious compass, and when he

raised its tones, no cathedral organ could pour forth a fuller stream of sound. Though dangerous when his passions were roused, reckless of human life as an Eastern despot, and, as Lafayette has proved, utterly devoid of principle, yet Danton was not without his redeeming qualities. He was brave as a lion ; generous to profusion ; incapable of harbouring lasting resentment against individuals ; social, and even good-natured ; ambitious, not for himself, but his party ; and sincere in his wish to improve the condition of his fellow-countrymen. Like Mirabeau, to whom he has been sometimes compared, his eloquence was of a bold, abrupt, impassioned character ; and he never failed to astonish, even if he did not convince, his hearers. As a revolutionary leader, he was great only by fits and starts, for his indolence equalled his ambition, and disqualified him for severe, continuous exertions. It is a singular fact that this "exterminator without ferocity," as Thiers calls him, who seemed to be only in his element when, like Addison's Destroying Angel, he was "riding on the whirlwind and directing the storm," was passionately fond of the simple enjoyments of rural life ; and in his last moments his mind, in a distracted state,

reverted to the innocent happiness of his earlier years, when he used to stroll through the woods and fields of his native province, gathering wild-flowers, and listening to the various music of the birds. Such was Danton, who just now exercised all but sovereign sway in France, and was dreaded equally by friends and foes.

“ I don’t like him,” muttered the absent-minded Servette, but in a tone of voice which, luckily, was not overheard: “ I never shall like him ; but I must not let my dislike be seen, or my poor Alphonse will be the sufferer.”

After a short conference, the stranger took his leave of Danton, who thereupon approached Servette, and said, in a harsh, abrupt manner:

“ So you come from the Minister of the Interior ?”

“ I do ; and it was his particular desire that I should see you as soon as possible.”

“ And what is the nature of your communication with me ?”

“ It regards a young man who is now imprisoned as a suspected person in the Bicêtre—”

“ I guessed as much,” interrupted Danton, fiercely. “ This is the fourth application for the discharge of aristocrats that I have been plagued

with to-day. Look here," he added, taking up some papers that lay on the table, "here is an humble petition from the Duc de Brissac, requesting his release from the Abbaye, as it is all a mistake to suppose that he is a royalist—the false, cowardly traitor to both parties!—here is a note from M. de Grémion, appealing to my compassion, and telling me how he would act, if our cases were reversed—here, the crafty Vioménil writes me word from La Force, that he is no longer an aristocrat, but resigns the title with contempt. Ha! ha! It's surprizing how a few days' imprisonment sharpens a royalist's wits! and here, is an artful letter from M. Durivault, wherein he offers me half his estate in Brittany, to allow him to make his escape, snugly and quietly, from the Châtelet—ay, this is the most sensible fellow of them all; but it won't do, M. Durivault, France needs your head and your estate too; and she shall have both, ere the week is a day older. Justice must and shall take its course!"

"And so it ought, and so I trust it ever will," replied Servette, calmly; "but in the present heated state of men's minds, it is to be feared that the innocent may be confounded with the

guilty, as in the instance of the young man in whose behalf I now plead. His acquaintance with Roland, and my long knowledge of his character, are sufficient guarantees—”

“ *Your* long knowledge, citizen !” interposed Danton, haughtily ; “ and who may you be ? for I do not remember to have seen you before, familiar as I am with the leading men of the day.”

“ My name is Servette, and I have the honour to be editor of a daily journal, which you yourself have frequently quoted with approbation in the Assembly.”

Though as a rude, unlettered man of action, Danton had no great respect for those whose avocation was the pen, yet he had quite tact enough to know that it was not his interest to let his contempt be seen ; so with more civility than he had yet shown, he answered : “ I should be glad to oblige you, citizen, not only for your own sake, but also for my friend, Roland’s ; but in this case it is impossible, for I am responsible to the people for my conduct, and I dare not abuse their confidence. Lenity is absolute injustice, in one circumstanced as I am. Look, too, at the situation of the country ! The

emigrants are stirring Heaven and earth against us at Coblenz ; the court of Turin is ready to resort to arms ; La Vendée is in open insurrection ; the Prussians are within three days' march of the capital ; and, as if this were not enough, a conspiracy is brewing here among the royalists in the prisons."

" A conspiracy in the prisons !" exclaimed Servette : " impossible !"

" I am not wont to have my statements questioned," said Danton. " I repeat, the imprisoned aristocrats are secretly leagued with the Prussians to betray the cause of freedom ; and if we would save France from this, and the thousand other dangers with which she is beset, we must annihilate the traitors — annihilate them, I say, without remorse !" and he raised his voice, and stamped heavily on the ground, as though he were crushing some obnoxious reptile beneath his feet. And, pray," he continued, " who is this young man in whom you and my colleague Roland are so interested ?"

When Servette mentioned his name, and the circumstances under which he had become acquainted with him, Danton rejoined, eagerly. " Then, citizen, if you were his tutor, it is to be

presumed that you imbued him with just and liberal principles ; and if so, he need fear nothing, imprisonment in his case, being merely a matter of precaution. Assure me only that he entertains your enlightened views of government, and I will this instant sign the order for his release. You see what confidence I place in your simple asseveration," and he smiled with a would-be gracious air.

Fearful of injuring his friend by a bold avowal of facts, yet shrinking, with the sensitiveness of a noble nature, from the perpetration of a deliberate falsehood, Servette made no reply ; on which Danton, who watched him with a lynx eye, and guessed what was passing in his mind, continued : " You hesitate ; ah, I see you are conscious that your pupil is one whose principles you cannot approve."

" I will not deceive you," rejoined the high-minded old man. " When I had the direction of my young friend's studies, I did my best to instil into him such principles as I myself uphold ; but there were certain hereditary prejudices which I could not remove. Alphonse, however, is no bigoted aristocrat—that, at least, I took care to prevent ; and no one rejoiced more

than he did, at the successes of the American patriots."

"Humph!" muttered Danton, impatiently.

"'Tis a fact," resumed Servette "and as a proof of it, I may mention that when I printed my Essay on the character of the immortal Washington, some years ago at Nantes, my pupil, who was then a mere boy, translated it of his own accord into English, which of course he would not have done had not its style and sentiments hit his fancy. I have his translation by me at this moment, and a cleverer school exercise—but you shall see it yourself, only I must request you will take great care of the manuscripts."

"No, no," interrupted Danton, smiling good-humouredly, "I have no desire to see the translation; these things are quite out of my way; so, to come to the point—for my time is precious—where was it you resided with this young man as tutor?"

"At his father's château."

"That is only half an answer to my question. Whereabouts is this chateau situated?"

"A few leagues from Nantes."

"On the borders of La Vendée, I presume?"

“ Yes.”

“ And the elder De Chatillon is one of the chief seigneurs of the district ?”

“ He certainly is not without local influence.”

“ And yet,” exclaimed Danton, with one of those sudden, impetuous bursts which he rarely deigned to control. “ Though La Vendée is in open revolt, and this youth’s father is, doubtless, foremost among the rebels, you have the audacity to ask me to liberate his only son and heir ! It shall not be—I say it shall not be ! To show mercy in a case like this, is to show the most puling weakness. Mercy indeed ! Mercy to the young spawn of rebellion ! Never. Let the vengeance of the people pass. Citizen, you have your answer.”

“ I have indeed,” said Servette, dejectedly, “ and what an answer ! God grant, Danton, that the mercy you now deny to the innocent, may not one day in your need be denied to you ! You are all hope and self-confidence now, and blest with youth and health and strong in the affections of the people, you dream not of future reverses ; but, remember, popularity is a thing of chance and change—your’s one hour, mine

the next ; and the time may come when, bowed down by the pressure of grief and age, and forgotten by those who once regarded you as their idol, you may require all the consolation that is to be derived from the recollection of acts of mercy and beneficence. And are you not Minister of Justice ? Oh ! think what an awful responsibility attaches to you in that character ! Think, when your last hour arrives, when the world is fading from your view, and that new existence is dawning, which it is in your own power to make throughout eternity a blessing or a curse—think, Danton, how terrible will be the reflection—”

“ My last hour !” exclaimed Danton, scornfully. “ Do you suppose that I, who have struggled through a thousand dangers to reach my present position, and who know and feel that I am surrounded by friends who bide but their time to become my foes, am not steeled against the worst that can happen ? When I set about this task of a people’s regeneration, I foresaw at once that I should pay the penalty with my life. You look surprized, but I speak from the strong conviction of my heart when I tell you, in this my hour of triumph, that I

shall perish in the storm I have created. But, mark me, old man, my last hour shall not be one of maudling, unavailing remorse. I will die, as I have lived, a man ! regretting nothing I have done in this world, fearing nothing, as regards the next !” As Danton uttered these words, he shook his clenched right hand above his head—a favourite habit with him, when desirous to make an impression.

“ And so this brave, generous, innocent youth must die,” said Servette, in tones of deep grief. “ Ah me ! the shock will be worse to his friends than to himself, for, if I mistake him not, he will meet his fate with the calm resolution of a stoic.”

There was something in these few simple words that affected Danton more than anything that had yet been said ; for, courageous himself, he respected this quality in another ; and might not have been averse to grant Alphonse’s release, had he not already committed himself. His better feelings thus struggling with his wish to maintain his character for inflexibility of purpose, he vented his spleen on Servette, who had occasioned him this secret embarrassment, observing : “ I have no patience, citizen, with

your folly and infatuation—to use no harsher term—in applying to me for the pardon of an aristocrat, when you must be aware how imperative is the necessity for our striking terror into the hearts of our enemies. If we do not crush these conspirators, they will crush us; there can be no middle course: one party or the other must perish. Time was when, without compromising the cause of the people, we might have listened to the dictates of mercy, but that time is past.”

“The time for acting justly and mercifully can never have passed,” replied Servette.

“Pshaw! you are like Brissot and the rest of the Girondists, who are always spinning fine theories, and broaching fine sentiments, when they should be playing the part of shrewd, worldly statesmen. But, after all, you are right—yes, both you and they are right, for mere literary men should stick to their vocation, and not trouble their heads about the practical business of revolution. The closet is their proper sphere of action.”

“Mere literary men!” exclaimed Servette, indignantly, for in the simplicity and unworldliness of his nature, he considered an author as

the greatest of human beings, and literature as the noblest pursuit on earth; “mere literary men! And what would France—Europe—the world—be without them? ’Tis we who give the impulse, and originate the intelligence that rouses and enlightens benighted nations. Like mountain summits, we first catch the sun’s rays, while the valleys below are yet sleeping in darkness. We are the pioneers of all social and political improvement. Where would have been your *Tiers État*—where your constitution—where your National Guard—had not those mighty spirits, whom you profess to hold in scorn, paved the way by their writings for such innovations on the old order of things? Think not, Danton, ’tis mere brute force that has just shaken the fabric of absolutism to its foundations; no, ’tis the irresistible eloquence and reasoning of our encyclopædists and philosophers. They are the true conquerors of the Bastille.—But whither am I wandering?” continued the excited old man, making an effort to recal his truant thoughts, as he saw Danton regarding him with a look of surprize, not unmingled with contempt. “Shame on the vanity and egotism that have rendered me for-

getful of my poor friend ! Alas ! at this moment his doom may have been sealed !”

“ Not unlikely,” rejoined Danton, with a careless laugh ; “ the doom of many an aristocratic conspirator will be sealed to-night.”

Just as he finished speaking, the bell of a neighbouring church began tolling, and presently was heard the booming thunder of the alarm-gun.

“ Good Heavens ! what is that ?” inquired Servette, as he stood listening to the slow, sullen toll of the warning bell.

“ ’Tis the death-knell of the conspirators !” replied Danton, gravely, with a forced effort at calmness. “ Another hour—but one more hour—and—”

“ And what ?” exclaimed Servette, impetuously. “ Speak out, and let me know the worst !”

For a brief minute’s space Danton started, as if struck with some sudden anguish, but quickly recovering himself, he made answer : “ Since you insist on knowing, citizen, you shall ; for what Danton orders, Danton dares avow. In another hour the conspirators will have ceased to exist, and the fall of Longwy and Verdun be avenged !”

Well may the fierce demagogue have started, for that gloomy bell, which flung its awful voice far and wide over the trembling capital, tolled the knell of not less than six thousand of his victims !

“ Almighty God !” exclaimed Servette, every muscle quivering with agitation, “ can it be possible ? Only one hour ?” and sinking on his knees before the Minister of Justice, who stood buried in gloomy thought, the old man thus addressed him, his eyes streaming the while with tears : “ Oh, Danton, if I cannot prevail on you to spare all the wretched victims of this dreadful policy, at least let me, once more, conjure you to spare one whom I know to be as innocent as he is dauntless and high-hearted. Consider his youth, and the grey hairs of his sorrowing father ! You are brave, be generous—you are great, show true greatness by tempering justice with mercy. Men say that you are a fond and happy father, and that your infant child is to you as a second self ; think then what you would feel, were you, when that child had grown up to man’s estate, to plead for his dear life to some future Minister of Justice, and be met with the same chilling reply that you have

this day given me ! Oh, think what it is wantonly to extinguish that holy spirit of life which the Almighty gave, and which you cannot restore ! Lo, here in the dust at your feet, I conjure you to be true to yourself—true to your fame—true to that just and sacred cause of which you are the triumphant advocate ! You speak not ! Eternal God !”—and the old man clasped his hands together, and raised his eyes to heaven—“Eternal God, grant me power to touch the heart of this cold, haughty man, who, when he might descend to after ages as the benefactor of his fellow-creatures, can endure to be branded as their scourge. Still silent ? Well then”—and the speaker started abruptly to his feet—“since the voice of conscience and humanity finds no echo within your breast ; since blood must flow, no matter from whom, spare Alphonse, and take *me* as your victim ! Better, far better that the old should go than the young ; no one will miss the helpless, solitary man, whose lamp of life is already well-nigh extinguished ; besides, were it not so, I have lived long enough, since I have lived to see this day.”

The old man poured forth these supplications with such impassioned energy, and in tones of

such heart-felt anguish, that Danton, who had made many efforts to stop him, at length desisted from the unavailing task. Servette's solemn appeal to the Deity he acknowledged only by a smile of scornful incredulity; he was visibly affected, however, when he was reminded of his infant boy, to whom he was devotedly attached; but when the old man offered his own life in exchange for his friend's, the heroic generosity of the offer struck Danton so powerfully, that the tears actually stood in his eyes! The rock was smitten, and the living waters came gushing from it.

"Citizen," exclaimed the stern demagogue, dashing away the moisture from his lids, "your prayer is granted! The chosen friend of so magnanimous a spirit can never be the base, treacherous conspirator I had imagined. No, I see I was mistaken, and it is right that I make reparation. But, remember, I do this as an act of mere justice, not of pity," and advancing to the table, he sate down and wrote with an unsteady hand an order for Alphonse's release, to the jailer of the Bicêtre. "Away," he added, thrusting the document into Servette's hands, "lose not a moment, or you may be too late. Not a

word—no thanks—you owe nothing to my compassion—away, away !” and he pushed him towards the door.

No sooner was he gone, than Danton resumed his seat at the table, and in a few minutes had regained much of his usual stoical hardihood.

“ Strange !” he muttered, twisting a pen convulsively between his fingers, “ strange, that this old man’s words should have roused in me feelings that I thought never to have known again. There was a time when I could not have found it in my heart to trample even on a worm ; when the cry of anguish never reached my ear in vain, and when the severest grief my boyhood knew, was my inability to assuage the grief of others. But this, like other weaknesses, is past—thanks to the haughty aristocrats who have made me what I am. The shallow, arrogant tyrants ! They have spurned, oppressed, trod upon me ; thwarted me at every turn, bidding me creep when I would fain have soared ; and all because the blood of a hundred ancestors did not flow in my veins ! But was I less a man for that ? Had I not—have I not—the same feelings, passions, virtues, and it may be vices, as those who deduce their origin from the peers

of Charlemagne? And shall I show mercy to them who never showed it to me? As I am a man, no! The despised lawyer, the friendless plebeian of Arcis, shall show these insolent upstarts what it is to make one like him their foe—their relentless, deadly foe. The game is in my own hands now. Ha, ha! Even while I speak, they are falling prostrate—cringing in the dust—before the power I have unloosed this night. Glorious vengeance! Why, what a fool was I to be unmanned so but a short while since!—but my heart feels all the lighter for it—and now for the Cordeliers!”

CHAPTER V.

WHILE Servette was on his road to the hôtel of the Minister of Justice, to seek the interview related in the preceding chapter, Alphonse was anxiously speculating, in the gloomy solitude of his dungeon, on the chances of his friend's interference. The last lingering gleam of twilight had faded from the walls, and thick darkness encompassed him. Occasionally, rough voices, and the hasty tread of footsteps along the passage, with the frequent opening and clapping-to of doors, confirmed him in the truth of Jacques's words, that mischief was brewing ; and he had just decided on making one more appeal to the better feelings of that functionary, when the prison-door opened, and he again stood before him.

Far different was Jacques's countenance now to what it had been when Alphonse last saw him.

"I have seen your friend," he said, in a smiling whisper, "and am pretty sure that his promised interference will be successful; so cheer up, Monsieur de Chatillon. Alas! you will have need of all your courage, for the municipal authorities are just now about to summon the aristocrats to trial, and few thus tried will escape."

"The wretches!" exclaimed Alphonse, indignantly.

"Hush, hush!" said Jacques, alarmed, "we must be silent; if a word transpires, our doom is sealed."

"Ah, Jacques," replied the prisoner, "if it be really true that the municipal officers have arrived, my doom may be sealed before my friend can have time to interfere."

"It is never too late to despair, Monsieur, as I have heard my old master say a hundred times."

"It is not for myself I despair," said Alphonse, mildly; "but when I think of one whose hopes and happiness are bound up with—"

“Depend on it,” said Jacques, interrupting the sombre tenor of De Chatillon’s reflections, “you will yet see the Marquis again,” taking for granted that he was alluding to his father; “so pray keep up a stout heart, for should you be summoned into the presence of the authorities before your deliverer arrives, much—very much—will depend on the confident front you exhibit. Appear depressed or panic-stricken, and your judges will at once set you down as guilty. But, as I told you before, Monsieur, I have strong hopes that you will be spared the suspense of a trial, and that your friend will arrive in good time, with a warrant for your liberation;” and with this consoling assurance Jacques quitted the cell.

Half an hour elapsed, and still no appearance of Servette. Alphonse was now in a state of the most pitiable anxiety, tortured alike with hopes and fears—at one moment willing to believe that his release was certain; at another, firmly persuaded that it was impossible. What are the worst torments that can befall us, compared with those we suffer when stretched on the rack of uncertainty? Let our fate be once decided—let us but *know* the worst, and by a

vigorous mental effort we can reconcile ourselves to the endurance of that worst; but suspense, where nothing is ascertained, nothing is settled, and where, consequently, the imagination has free power to raise or depress, to soothe or torture—this is a curse which there is no bearing; it is a phantom with which there is no grappling, for it mocks our vision, and eludes our grasp. It is now a smiling angel of light; and now, a fiend from the lowest hell. This minute, it whispers in our ears the cheering words of hope; the next, it chills our blood with the freezing accents of despair.

In Alphonse's case—as indeed in most cases of the sort—there was ample scope for the play of an excited imagination, for the stir in the passage became momentarily more active, and occasionally a scuffling was heard, as if some reluctant aristocrat were being forcibly dragged along into the presence of his judges. While the young man was listening to these boding noises, an alarm-gun was fired, and at the same instant several church-bells began tolling. The sounds were the same that had reached the ears of Danton and Servette. Alphonse guessed their import, and no longer doubting his fate,

endeavoured so to steel his mind as to meet it with dogged fortitude. "That is the signal," said he, "for the trial and massacre of the prisoners ; my turn will come shortly, and all that remains is, that I bear up like a man to the last. The passage from life to death, though painful, will be but short ; but, alas ! for poor Annette !" and the tears which he scorned to shed for himself, fell at the thoughts of her who was dearest to his heart.

Such was his state of mind when the door of his cell was once again unlocked. Springing from despair to hope—so unwilling is the buoyant nature of youth to admit painful truths—he darted forward ; but instead of Jacques or Servette, a stranger entered—the same who had encountered Alphonse in the streets, and assaulted him with such unaccountable inveteracy of purpose.

"I warned you we should meet again," exclaimed the stranger, placing a lamp, which he had brought with him, on the table, and advancing so as directly to confront De Chatillon ; "and I guessed that it would be here, or in some other of the public prisons, for you were seen on the night of the storming of the

Tuilleries, taking an active part against the people. And you thought, I suppose, by means of your disguise, to have escaped detection, as easily as you escaped my sword! Fool! your conduct has been long watched, and within the hour you will have paid the penalty of your treason."

The stranger spoke thus in the deep, stern tones of settled hate; and as he concluded, looked searchingly into Alphonse's face, evidently in the hope that he would there read tokens of abject fear and horror.

But he was doomed to be disappointed, for the young man's countenance expressed no stronger emotion than surprize, that one whom he had never injured should entertain towards him feelings of such deadly rancour. "Who are you," he said, calmly addressing the stranger, "that speak such bitter words? It is impossible I could ever have given you cause of complaint, for I never saw you till the night we met at Roland's, and certainly nothing took place there between us to excite your spleen, or justify you afterwards in playing the part of an assassin. But perhaps my great offence is, that I am an aristocrat and a loyalist."

“Hear me, Alphonse de Chatillon,” exclaimed the stranger. “Were you the greatest tyrant that ever cursed France, I should not hate you with half the intensity I do at this moment.”

“And wherefore, I again ask, all this special hate?”

“Because you bear the name of De Chatillon—because your look, your voice, your manner—everything, in short, about you—remind me of the most humiliating passage of my life.”

This was uttered with such passionate energy, the stranger’s eyes seeming to flash fire at each word, that the young man looked up in his face, more than half-persuaded that a maniac stood before him.

“I see you think me mad,” resumed the stranger; “but though I have borne quite enough at your father’s hands to make me so—”

“So it is my father, then, that is the aggressor! It is not the most generous way to make the son answerable for the conduct of the parent; but let me know what was the wrong a Chatillon has done you, and if atonement can be made—”

“No atonement can be made,” said the stranger, vehemently interrupting Alphonse, “nor shall anything satisfy me, short of the destruction of the whole race of De Chatillon! When that is accomplished, I cry quits—till then, never!”

“Dreadful!” exclaimed the young man, with emotion; “such hate is the hate of a demon.”

“Did you ever hear your father speak of one Louise de Padilla?” asked the stranger, abruptly.

“I have seldom or never heard him speak of any woman. He is not partial to the sex, and avoids their society as much as possible.”

“And well he may, for he has good cause—excellent cause,” rejoined the stranger, with a laugh of derision; “but of Louise, she was my destined bride; your father knew it—he could not but know it, though he pretended otherwise; but notwithstanding his undoubted knowledge of the fact, and that he professed at the time to be my friend, he wooed and wedded her, taking advantage of his superior rank to ensnare the vanity of a coquette.”

“If it be of my mother you are speaking,” said Alphonse, “beware; I will not hear her memory profaned.”

Casting a supercilious glance at the speaker, as if his threat were not worth notice, the stranger resumed: "That accursed marriage, eagerly as your love-sick father desired it, brought him nought but sorrow and humiliation, while on me it heaped disaster on disaster which I must have sunk under, had I not been kept alive by the hope of vengeance. How I was avenged in part need not be told—"

"Avenged! For what should you have been avenged? For my mother preferring my father to you? There was no great wrong done here, however wounded vanity may have induced you to think otherwise."

"How say you? Was it no great wrong in your father to blast my character at court? No great wrong in your mother to plunge the assassin's steel into my breast?"

"'Tis false—as I live, 'tis false!" exclaimed Alphonse, kindling with indignation: "though I never knew her, I feel convinced my mother could not have so acted towards even her bitterest enemy. You judge of her nature by your own."

"Spare the heroics, young seigneur," replied the stranger, with a withering sneer, "and know

for your comfort, that your mother was no worse than circumstances necessarily made her—no worse than the Polignacs, the Lamballes, the De Choiseuls, and the hundred other dames of rank and fashion whose domestic virtues shed such lustre on the moral court of Versailles. True, her gentler woman's nature did not shrink from the crime of murder ; but perhaps she had good reasons for what she did—so let her pass ; I have only told you thus much, in order to satisfy you that if I hate and loathe your very name, it is not without reason. It was a De Chatillon who made me what I am—who first crossed the path of my ambition, drove me with scorn and curses from France, and forced me to hide my dishonoured head for years in a distant land. I then swore a terrible oath that I would one day return ; and I have kept that oath. The revolution restored me to Paris, and I embraced it with ardour, for it held out to me the most glorious prospects of revenge. And those prospects are already more than half fulfilled ! The haughty nobles who once shunned me, I have lived to see exiles or prisoners ; the aristocratic barriers I could not pass, I have helped to break down ; and the

once degraded De Chantereau is now an officer of rank in the National Guard, and will shortly set out for La Vendée, as commander of a republican division in that revolted department. I need say no more, for I see that your fears anticipate all I would add."

"Now that I have heard your story," said Alphonse, with difficulty suppressing the stormy feelings of his soul, "I find nothing to justify your insatiable thirst for vengeance, but can gather, even from your own vague statement, that you have been the blind dupe of prejudice and passion, and never more so than when you accuse my father of having knowingly ensnared the affections of the lady whose heart you believed your own. Here, again, you judge of another by yourself; and no wonder you think that other capable of the worst treachery."

"Enough of this cant," replied De Chantereau, contemptuously, "it ill becomes the son of such a mother."

"My mother again!" exclaimed Alphonse, now wholly losing his self-control, "you have dared to brand her as an assassin, and I have tamely—too tamely—borne with you, thinking

that, as in my father's case, you might be the victim of your own wild prejudices ; but now I will bear with you no longer, so explain yourself, or dread the fury of a desperate man. Coward ! slanderer ! you are silent ; but I understand that sneer ! By Heaven, I will wrest the truth from you, if I tear your heart out !" and unarmed as he was, the young man rushed upon De Chantereau, who was taken by surprize at the suddenness and impetuosity of the assault.

"Now speak," exclaimed Alphonse, grasping him fast by the throat, "or I will strangle you."

By way of answer, De Chantereau clapped his hand on his sword, but before he could draw it from the scabbard, the head-jailer made his appearance, holding a bunch of keys in one hand, and the prison-register in the other.

The moment Alphonse beheld this official he let go his hold, and stood gloomily awaiting what he felt was his summons to death, while the man running hastily over the names in the register, exclaimed, in harsh, grating tones : "Alphonse de Chatillon, the municipal authorities demand your immediate attendance," adding, "it will not tell much in your favour that you

have been seen assaulting an officer of the National Guard."

"I accompany you," replied the young man. "And for you," he said, turning to De Chantereau, "I bequeath you the curse—the lasting curse—of a dying man. May it be a thorn ever rankling in your side—an ulcer ever festering in your heart!"

"Move on, young seigneur," said De Chantereau, with insulting *nonchalance*.

They had reached the door of the cell, when footsteps were heard hurrying along the passage, and presently Servette, breathless with haste, rushed up, followed by Jacques, and nearly overthrew the jailer who was a little in advance of the party.

"Sacré! What's the meaning of all this?" asked the surprized official.

"Alphonse, my friend—my pupil," exclaimed the old man fervently. "Thank God, I am not too late!"

"Who dares to interrupt the course of justice?" said De Chantereau, pressing forward. "Oh, a leave-taking, I see!" he added, scornfully, as his eye rested on the old man.

“Not so; he is free—I hold his pardon in my hand,” exclaimed Servette.

“Who dares talk of pardon?” said De Chantereau. “Why, he is one of the worst of the conspirators!”

“Look here!” pursued Servette, offering the document to the jailer, “here is the warrant for his liberation, regularly signed by Danton. I got it from the Minister of Justice himself. Take it—take it—quick.”

“A moment’s patience, citizen,” exclaimed the jailer, “I can’t see without my glasses,” and thrusting the keys and register into his coat-pocket, he took out his spectacles, and then laying hold of the offered document, he ran his eyes over it with as much cool indifference as if it were a mere ordinary matter of business; while Servette, who watched his countenance, waited the result in such a flutter of agitation, that a spectator, unacquainted with the circumstances, would have concluded that it was he, and not Alphonse, whose life was at stake.

“Humph! ay—well—it’s all right,” said the jailer, taking off his spectacles, and restoring them to an old shagreen case. “There can be

no mistaking the hand-writing ; so you are free, citizen."

"But I say he is not free—he shall not be free," exclaimed De Chantereau, furiously. "And if you allow him to leave the Bicêtre before his trial, you do so at your peril."

"I am not to be taught my duty by an officer of the National Guard," exclaimed the jailer, doggedly. "You are not on service here, so you will please allow me to take my own course in this matter. The youth, I say again, is free, for here is Danton's own signature to the order for his release."

"It is forged," said De Chantereau.

As he thus spoke, Servette looked at him attentively, and recognizing his features, said, addressing the jailer : "This is a case of sheer private malice, and justice has nothing to with it. My young friend here, by some means or other, has incurred this man's hatred, who has once already attempted his life, and is now—"

Before De Chantereau could reply to this charge, the jailer broke in with, "I guessed as much ; more than one aristocrat has already fallen a victim to private pique ; however," shrugging his shoulders, "that's no affair of mine ;

I have merely to obey my orders, and leave it to the municipality to settle the rights of the case. Forged, say you?" turning to De Chantereau, and handing the document to him: "examine it then yourself, and you will see at once that it is no forgery."

De Chantereau took the document; glanced at it carefully; considered a moment; and then with a shout of malicious exultation, tore it into a thousand fragments, observing, as he tossed them from him: "The order was a forged one, and I insist on the prisoner being instantly taken before his judges!"

Servette looked perfectly aghast at this unexpected act, and falling on his young friend's neck, said: "My poor boy, this villain is more than a match for us!"

"You have gained nothing by destroying the warrant, citizen," said the jailer, composedly, "for I shall act towards this youngster just as if it were still in existence. Danton is my friend and patron; he placed me in this situation; and whether the municipal authorities like it or not, I will obey to the letter every order signed by him."

“ But the prisoner is an aristocrat, and what’s worse, a desperate conspirator.”

“ Where he Monsieur Veto himself, and Danton had sent me an order for his release, that order should be strictly obeyed.”

“ Villain !” exclaimed De Chantereau passionately, “ I will report your conduct to the authorities.”

“ Report it to the devil, if you like,” said the jailer, in a surly independent tone.

De Chantereau now absolutely livid with passion, and resolved not to be a second time balked of his revenge, drew his sword and made a furious pass at Alphonse ; but the jailer, who seemed to have anticipated some such movement, grasped him tightly by both arms, and while he was struggling to extricate himself, said : “ Come here, Jacques, take the keys out of my coat-pocket, and conduct the prisoner and his friend across the yard to the gate. If any one offers to stop you, say that you have Danton’s order for their release, and that I have sent you to protect them. Be sure you see them safe out, and then lock the gate again, and be quick back, while my friend here and I have some talk together.”

This order was instantly complied with, and when the party had quitted the passage, the jailer relaxed his hold of De Chantereau, who had been struggling like a maniac in his grasp, observing : “ Now, citizen, I’m ready to accompany you to the authorities, and learn from them who’s right and who’s wrong in this business ; and harky’e, a word in your ear—when you next feel disposed to bully, make sure of your man beforehand ! These are not times when rank can justify insult. I am a French citizen, and you are no more, even though you hold a command in the National Guard. Villain, forsooth ! And all because I would not neglect my duty to gratify your wishes ! Why don’t you come along ? Well, if you won’t stir, I must,” and with these words, he turned away, leaving De Chantereau alone, his eyes cast on the ground, in a state of utter stupefaction.

As they hurried across the prison-yard, the ears of Alphonse and his preserver were shocked by hoarse shouts and curses, mingled with piercing screams, and the clashing of pikes and swords, proceeding apparently from a distant quarter of the Bicêtre. The young man would fain have turned back, and rushed to the assistance

of the helpless victims of revolutionary frenzy, but Jacques reminded him that he was unarmed, and that it was, besides, impossible to obtain admittance to that part of the prison whence the horrid sounds came; while Servette added with deep emotion, "Accursed be the men who disgrace the cause of liberty by such atrocities. Surely Roland and Brissot cannot be aware of what is going on here! No; it must be Danton's act, and his only; and I will go instantly to the council, and see if I cannot get his orders overruled, and these massacres stayed."

They were now standing before the prison-gates, which Jacques unlocked, after taking an affectionate leave of Alphonse; and when the door closed on them, and the young man found himself once again at liberty, he earnestly besought Servette to lose not a moment in putting his design into execution, as otherwise, hundreds of innocent lives would be sacrificed. The old man needed no pressing; but, being now perfectly assured of his friend's safety, took his way direct to the council; while Alphonse, whose physical energies were quite worn down by the excitement of the last few hours, repaired

to his former lodgings, which he never expected to enter again, having previously promised Servette to pay him a farewell visit early on the following day, as it was his intention to set out for La Vendée forthwith.

The young man was received by his landlord with as much astonishment as if he had risen from the dead, and had to relate twice over the particulars of his escape, before the good man's curiosity was satisfied. When at length he had answered—though with infinite reluctance—all the numerous questions that were put to him, he expressed a wish to be left alone, and betook himself immediately to bed, whence he rose sometimes in the morning; and having made such hasty arrangements as were necessary for his journey, taking care to continue his plebeian disguise, as a matter of precaution, he called, as promised, on Servette, whom he found waiting to receive him, with his passport ready made out for use.

As they directed their course towards the barrier, Alphonse eagerly inquired of his friend what success he had met with in his efforts to put a stop to the prison massacres, to which the other replied, in dejected tones: "I saw

Roland and Brissot, and they both promised that they would go and remonstrate urgently with Danton on the subject; but, alas! the deed is done, and no remonstrance can call back to life the hundreds who were so cruelly butchered last night."

"Curses—eternal curses on the fiends who have committed these atrocities!" replied Alphonse, warmly.

"You may well call them fiends," rejoined Servette, "for they have nothing of humanity about them but the form."

"But surely the majority of the prisoners will be saved through Roland's intercession! Will they not?" inquired Alphonse.

"I hope so," was the reply. "But Danton is a bold, heartless, desperate man, who sets not the slightest store on human life. It was with the greatest difficulty I wrung from him the order for your release."

"My noble, generous friend," exclaimed Alphonse; "I can imagine the difficulty you must have had, to say nothing of the personal hazards you must have run, in suing to such a villain; and never, till my heart ceases to beat, shall I forget your magnanimous inter-

cession ; you came just in time—an instant longer and your success would have been un-availing.” And the young man proceeded to mention the particulars of his interview with De Chantereau, and the latter’s avowed determination to leave no stone unturned to accomplish the ruin of his father and himself, adding : “ And he departs shortly for La Vendée, to take the command of a republican division there. God grant that we may meet face to face on the battle-field !”

“ Alas, for the hot blood of youth !” said the old man, looking kindly and sadly in his companion’s face. “ There was a time when I too, could have felt as you now feel ; but age, and infirmity, and the grief which comes of experience, have long since crushed all strong emotions within me, and but one desire remains—that of being numbered among those who have done their utmost to benefit humanity. As a man, I cannot but take interest in what concerns the welfare of my fellow-man ; but at times, my young friend, I have—shall I confess it to you ?—strange misgivings, and begin almost to doubt the value of that freedom, which is only to be acquired

by wading through seas of blood. My soul is weary of the horrors that are daily perpetrated, and were it not that I look confidently forward to a more auspicious season, I would bless the stroke that should dismiss me from life. But you are young yet; you know nothing of that distrust and despondency which, in reasons despite, cling to age, as the ivy clings to the withered tree; you go to La Vendée, full of faith in the cause in which you draw your sword—be it so; but I would fain know you otherwise engaged, for war—civil war, especially—is my abhorrence, and the party to which you have attached your fortunes—”

“Forbear, I entreat you,” interrupted Alphonse, “to urge me further on this point. You cannot shake my convictions.”

“Prejudices, you should call them,” replied Servette, with a faint smile; “and such as I wish, and have often wished, it were in my power to remove. But since you will not be advised, at least let me entreat you to defer so far to an old man’s opinions, as to betray no intemperate zeal—no headstrong party fanaticism, but to give your natural good sense fair play; and, above all, in whatever scenes

of warfare you may be engaged, to remember that, whether republicans or loyalists, we are all children of one common parent, and as such have the strongest claim on each other's forbearance and pity. Let this reflection, which I implore you never to lose sight of, dispose your heart to mercy in the stern hour of battle, and—but here we are at the barrier,” and bustling forward, as if he feared to trust himself with further speech, Servette presented the passport to an officer at the gate, who, after perusing it, and casting a penetrating glance at Alphonse, allowed him to pass out ; and the friends, by a sort of tacit agreement, took a hasty farewell of each other—for their hearts were full, and they were unwilling to expose their emotions to the prying gaze of the bystanders.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR story now returns to La Vendée, of whose situation during the younger De Chatillon's residence in Paris, it is necessary to give a brief account. The anti-revolutionary ferment which, provoked by the intemperate zeal of the constitutionalists at Nantes and in some of the minor towns, was beginning to develop itself along the frontier, at the time when Alphonse quitted home, was not slow in making its way into the heart of the province. The order issued by Government to the local authorities, to remove the seats of the seigneurs from the churches—a feudal distinction exceedingly distasteful to the advocates of the new *régime*—was the first thing that excited discontent among

the peasantry. The law which imposed a constitutional oath on their clergy, annoyed them still more, for they were led to believe that it was the first step towards a direct attack on their religion, which they clung to with strong affection. And when it was next attempted to replace their beloved pastors by strangers, whose sole recommendation was that they had given in their unqualified adhesion to the principles of the revolution, the indignant peasants deserted the churches, and, like the Scottish Cameronians, gathered together, arms in hand, accompanied by the recusant curés, to hear mass in the field, the forest, or beside the highways.

As yet, the movement was chiefly confined to the lower classes, for the seigneurs, though they held sympathies in common with their dependants, were too prudent to give them any open or direct encouragement. The elder De Chatillon, especially, notwithstanding his bold and independent nature, remembered his promise to De Sevrac, not to appear in the field till events should favour a general rising, and contented himself for the present with disobeying the order for the removal of his seat from church, and insisting on the summary

departure of the clergyman who had been sent to replace his own curé. He found it difficult, however, to keep down the excitement that prevailed throughout the district; and when the news of the King's escape and subsequent capture reached the Bocage, and a system of *espionnage* began to be instituted, nothing could restrain the indignation of the peasantry. Several severe skirmishes took place between them and the National Guards of the Plain; thirty or forty parishes assembled tumultuously in arms, and more than a hundred brave fellows were slain in the field, who were offered quarter if they would only abandon their seigneurs, and enlist under the banner of the republic, but who preferred death to what they deemed dishonour.

The ferment was still further increased by the unexpected demand of the Legislature for a conscription of three hundred thousand men. This, which would have compelled the Vendéans to fight for a cause they abhorred, roused the whole province. A large party met at St. Florent with the avowed determination of resisting the demand; and when the leader of the republican troops found exhortation and remonstrance of

no avail, he commenced a fierce attack on them. Headed by a spirited wool-dealer, Jacques Cathalineau, the peasants routed the republicans, then rang the tocsin, and calling on all who loved France to follow them, assaulted and conquered other forces who were stationed in the neighbourhood. The news of these successful skirmishes soon spread far and wide, fresh bodies of insurgents were daily raised, and one Stofflet, a gamekeeper, putting himself at the head of a numerous detachment, joined Cathalineau, marched upon the town of Chollet, and took it notwithstanding it was garrisoned by five hundred republicans.

It is from the capture of this town, one of the most considerable in the district, that the great civil war in La Vendée may be said to date its commencement. The peasantry now began to insist generally on their seigneurs putting themselves at the head of the movement; for hitherto they had been commanded by men of their own station in life who, though skilful and adventurous, were unable to maintain that strict, uniform authority over the minds of their followers, which is so indispensable to success in all military matters. In that part of La Vendée

which borders on the sea, and which from the number of its salt marshes is called the Marais, the insurgents refused to obey any other leader than Charette, who was descended from an ancient Breton family, and who had served with distinction in the navy, but on the peace had returned to his paternal estates, where—like the rest of the seigneurs—he spent his time for the most part in the sports of the field. This chief, who subsequently became one of the most formidable of the Vendean leaders, at first hesitated to accept the command, and pointed out to the peasants the extreme folly, not to say the madness, of their scheme of insurrection; but finding them immoveable in their determination to oppose an armed front to the further progress of the revolution, he at length complied with their wishes, and supported by a strong insurgent force, took possession of the island of Noirmoutiers—an important post which in case of necessity, he might make his point of communication with England.

Like Charette, the Marquis de Chatillon, when first directly applied to by the neighbouring peasants to place himself at their head, gave a decided refusal; but no sooner did the tidings reach his ears of the overthrow of the throne on the 10th of August, than all his scruples were at an end;

he saw that the hour predicted by his friend, the Count de Sevrac, was come, to draw the sword and fling away the scabbard, and determined on taking the field without further delay, in the confident expectation that he should shortly be joined by his son who, now that the constitutional party were lords of the ascendant in Paris, had no longer a motive for continuing his residence in that capital.

The very day after the Marquis had come to this determination, he was summoned to act upon it. A corps of insurgents, armed with pikes, muskets, clubs, pitchforks, and whatever other weapons came readiest to hand, assembled early one morning on the table-land adjoining the village of Lavallière, and after a noisy discussion, as to who should be their leader, decided on the Marquis de Chatillon, as being best known to them from his long, uninterrupted residence in the Bocage. Accordingly, they sent off a deputation to the château with a request, bearing very much the aspect of a demand, that he would come and lead them against a republican detachment which was reported to be advancing into the interior of the district from Nantes, under the command of Colonel St. Lambert.

The Marquis was seated at breakfast with the Curé, who now resided altogether at the château, when his *maître-d'hôtel*, our old friend Pierre, informed him of the arrival of the deputation, and of their wish to have an immediate interview with him.

“Admit them by all means,” said the Seigneur, “the brave fellows; I can guess the purport of their visit, and take shame to myself that it should be necessary, and that instead of summoning others, others should be forced to summon me, into the field of action.”

“As a man of peace, and a Christian pastor,” said the Curé, modestly, “I commend your reluctance to shed blood.”

“Well said, well said,” replied the Marquis, impatiently; “but, my good friend, you are not in the pulpit now.”

The deputation, consisting of half-a-dozen determined young farmers from Lavallière, each armed with a fowling-piece, here entered the apartment. The Marquis gave them a cordial reception, and at once acceded to their request, observing how deeply he regretted having allowed other chiefs to take the field before him. “A Chatillon,” said he, “should have been fore-

most in defence of the monarchy; but there were reasons for my delay, which it is not necessary to recapitulate; enough to say, those reasons exist no longer, and henceforth, my friends, we sink or swim together in the cause in which we have embarked. And where are the brave fellows who have sent you hither?"

"They are mustered on the heights of Laval-lière, momentarily expecting your arrival," replied one of the deputation. "There is no time to be lost, for we have sure intelligence that St. Lambert's detachment is advancing in this direction from Nantes, in the hope of coming on us by surprise."

The Marquis summoned his *maître-d'hôtel* "My sword and pistols, Pierre—but stay, not the sword which I ordinarily wear on hunting-days, but the one worn by my grandfather on his Dutch campaign. You know where it hangs, so quick, man, quick!"

Pierre soon returned, and the Marquis putting on his hunting-belt, stuck the pistols into it; and then, as he buckled the sword to his side, having previously pressed it with reverence to his lips, he said:

"It has seen good service, and was never drawn in a better cause than that in which it is

now again to be unsheathed. May it prove as efficient a weapon in my hands as it was in those of my illustrious ancestor ! Pierre, hoist the white flag on the château, and give free ingress to all who may have honour and courage enough to rally under the banner of the monarchy. Doubtless, in a few hours you will be able to muster sufficient men for the purposes of defence, in case the château should be attacked. But I have no fears on that score, for the local authorities must be reinforced, before they can stir to any effect ; and stir they shall not, if I can help it. And now, let us hasten forth. Allons, mes braves !” and the party set forward on their march.

When the Marquis, who was a few paces in advance of his companions, was recognized by the insurgents, they welcomed his arrival among them with enthusiastic acclamations. Cheer after cheer arose, and was responded to by the women and children, and those of the neighbouring peasantry who were too old to bear arms, who came eagerly pressing forward to pay their tribute of respect and affection to the Seigneur, and the brave partakers of his enterprize. Many of the females brought white cockades, which they distributed among such of the young men as they happened to know ; and others bore scarfs, wreaths of flowers, and red

kerchiefs for the head, and those who were lucky enough to obtain these mementos, swore never to part with them, but with life. The scene was a most inspiring one, but its joyous and sanguine character was awhile changed for one of a sterner and more solemn temper, when an aged pastor who had been driven from his cure by the republicans, and after remaining for some days concealed in the dense woods of the Bocage, had sought shelter among the peasantry of Lavallière, advanced bare-headed from the village in his robes of office, bearing a small crucifix in his hand, and supported by two sturdy young farmers. The old man's arrival stilled at once the general tumult, and when the Marquis stepped forward to bid him welcome, and led him into the midst of the insurgents, they instantly gathered round him, forming a deep, close-wedged circle; and as he slowly raised the crucifix, every knee bent—every eye was uplifted to heaven. In a few, brief, touching sentences, he reminded them of the duties required at their hands; and having concluded his exhortation, and invoked a blessing on their enterprize, he bade them set forth with good heart, and then slowly retraced his steps to the village.

When the old man was gone, the Marquis, having by a wave of his hand enjoined silence, said :

“My friends, as it is at your request I have promptly and cheerfully taken up arms, I trust you will not be slow to yield me obedience as your chief. Above all, let there be no dissensions nor jealousies amongst us. There is no difference in our interests; the cause for which we fight concerns us all equally, for all will be alike gainers or losers by defeat or victory. But no, we will not be defeated—we will perish rather! Our enemies are those who would deprive us of our laws, our liberties, our religion, our homes—nay, our very lives; and against such men, supported by such a cause as ours, it cannot be, but that we shall be successful. In a few hours, if the rumour of their advance be true, we shall come within sight of the republicans. Once engaged in the contest, strike, and strike home, and let each man so act, as if on his own right arm hung the issue of the struggle. *Vive le Roi!*”

Amid deafening shouts of “*Vive le Roi!*” the Vendéans commenced their march, at a firm and steady pace, though but little order or discipline was maintained among them. No emblazoned banners flaunted above their heads, no drums or trumpets cheered their progress with “stormy music,” none of the chivalrous pomp and parade of war appeared among them; but they needed

not such adventitious aids to excitement, for their deep, stern feelings were all-sufficient for every purpose required of them. As has been stated in the introductory chapter, the character of the Ven-dean peasant was far more thoughtful, reserved, and impassioned than that of Frenchmen in general; he was slow to be roused, but once roused, his energies were irresistible; and though his simplicity was easily imposed on, yet when once he felt cause for distrust, his jealous suspicion was never laid aside, but, like a well-trained sentinel, stood constantly on the watch. The time was now approaching when his nature was to be probed to the quick, and all that was good, as well as all that was evil, in it, to be stirred up from the lowest depths.

As the gallant band passed the small villages that lay scattered along their line of march, many of the peasantry turned out and joined them, and by the time they had advanced four leagues, their numbers had been so far increased, that they now formed a body of upwards of a thousand men; the Marquis walking sometimes at their head, and sometimes falling back, and mingling familiarly among them, with a view to gather as much various information as possible, respecting the movements of the other seigneurs, and more particularly those of Charette, along the coast.

They had been upwards of three hours on their march, and the sun had passed its meridian, when the Marquis brought the party to a halt, and in a few hurried words, explained to them more fully than he had yet done the nature of the operations he intended to carry on against the enemy, which were at once comprehended by his followers, who were perfectly familiar with the species of bush-fighting he projected. The spot where they halted, was in the middle of a straight and (for the country) tolerably broad road, which ran direct from Nantes, and in which several branch-roads terminated, like secondary streams that lose themselves in some great river. On either side the road—in this its broadest part—was a long, tangled, and lofty hedge, whose trees, now in full foliage, rose from a thick, grassy bank, about three feet in height, and in some places met overhead with their spreading boughs, so as to form a sort of natural arch above the road. These parallel lines of leafy hedge ran for nearly two miles, and behind them was excellent shelter for marksmen, who might rest their guns on the top of the grassy banks, and pour in a destructive fire on the enemy, while they themselves remained invisible.

A few minutes sufficed to make all the necessary arrangements. The men posted themselves

either side of the road, those who had guns taking up a position in front, and those who were otherwise armed, either standing immediately behind them, or moving lower down the road, so as to be ready at a given signal, to leap the hedges, and fall on the republicans while thrown into confusion by their comrades' fire. 'Twas curious to observe, when the council of war had broken up, and the final orders had been issued by the Seigneur, how instantly deserted was the road, which had just before been so crowded. Not a whisper was now heard, not a figure was visible; the whole corps had disappeared, as if by magic; and the Marquis, accompanied by one or two followers, walked twice up the road and down again, looking carefully on either side, in order to ascertain whether the ambuscade was complete. Having satisfied himself that all was as it should be, he clambered up the hedge, and armed only with his favourite sword, waited patiently at the head of the marksmen, the republicans' approach.

Though kept inactive in ambush beyond the period they had calculated upon, not the slightest impatience was visible among the Vendéans, for they were accustomed to crouch and watch in this manner during their hunting expeditions. And they were now to reap the full harvest of their for-

bearance, for the noon was not yet passed, when a distant hum arose, as of an advancing multitude, and presently was heard the steady tramp of armed soldiers, together with, at intervals, the flourish of martial music. On came the troops of the republic, the tricolor banners waving above their heads, and their polished arms flashing in the blazing sunlight; on they came, at a brisk but well-timed pace, laughing and talking, and singing popular military airs with all the vivacity and thoughtlessness characteristic of the most mercurial of nations, evidently little anticipating an attack, and consequently unprepared—if a French soldier can be said to be ever unprepared—to resist a sudden surprise.

They were entering the fatal pass, when their commanding officer, Colonel St. Lambert, turning gaily round to a young volunteer who rode on horseback beside him, said: "If the brigands, now, were at all acquainted with the science of war, and knew how to avail themselves of opportunities, they might attack us here to advantage."

"Pshaw!" replied his companion, contemptuously. "What advantage could an undisciplined rabble, like the Vendean recruits, ever hope to gain over us? Has a single detachment dared

to show itself, since our march from Nantes this morning ?”

“My young friend,” rejoined St. Lambert, “the end is not attained yet, so do not be too confident. This rabble, as you call the insurgents, has already defeated us more than once, and are not to be despised, I can assure you. Remember,” he added, with true national vanity, “they are Frenchmen ; and, whether loyalist or republican, the French soldier is always brave and skilful in war. Had they been English troops indeed, I grant you that they could not have stood an hour against our heroic patriots !”

The whole of the party were now fairly within the ambuscade, when on a sudden, Colonel St. Lambert, looking carelessly towards one of the thick, leafy hedges, exclaimed, in tones of alarm : “What’s that bright light ? By Heaven, ’tis the flashing of the sun on a gun-barrel !—Again !—Don’t you see it ? As I live, we’re surprized ! Look to your arms, my men—steady—halt. Ha, the brigands !—”

Before he could finish the sentence, the Marquis gave the concerted signal, and a tremendous discharge of musketry was poured down on the republicans from both sides the road, which picked on

them off by scores, and among them, the ardent young volunteer, who dropped stone-dead, shot right through the heart. For a minute or two, the whole road was thickly enveloped in smoke, but when it cleared off a little, a sad scene of confusion presented itself. Instead of exhibiting coolness or order, the majority of the republicans, who were raw conscripts, ran hither and thither without any apparent purpose, impeding each other's movements, and adding to the general panic. One detachment, headed by St. Lambert, who had just succeeded in extricating himself from his horse which had been shot under him, was rallied with difficulty, and clambered up the steep grassy bank ; but no sooner had they reached the summit, than the Vendean's poured in a second destructive volley, that tumbled them headlong back into the road. The Colonel, who was among the few who escaped this raking fire, made another desperate attempt to rally his troops, and waving his sword above his head, he commanded them to follow him, and dislodge the skulking rebels from their posts. About four hundred of the more experienced soldiers gathered instantly round him, and managed to form themselves into something like military order ; but at that moment a large body of the Vendean's rushed down on

them, like an avalanche, attacking them simultaneously in front and rear, while two other bodies who had blocked up both ends of the pass, now gradually drawing nearer, hemmed in the republicans on all sides. The Marquis was foremost to distinguish himself in this stern hand-to-hand fight; wherever the resistance was the greatest, there he was seen, encouraging his men, by his example, to yield not an inch of ground. St. Lambert, on his part, was not less ready to expose his life; more than once he had crossed swords with the Seigneur, but they had been hurried from each other in the *mêlée*, before either could put his opponent's prowess fairly to the test.

As the space wherein the battle was fought was circumscribed, there was no opportunity for the display of military manœuvres, else the republicans might still have had a chance, notwithstanding their diminished force, of redeeming the fortunes of the day; but though success was all but hopeless, for they had lost hundreds of their best men, and nearly three hundred had contrived to cut their way through the hedges, and so escape across the country, they still bravely maintained the struggle, and hurling themselves on the Vendéans with all the fierce energy of despair, made fearful gaps in their ranks. But, every minute

increased the certainty of their utter defeat, if not annihilation, for they dropped by dozens—by scores—beneath the swords, pikes, axes, and the other murderous weapons wielded by the infuriate peasantry.

Loud rose the cheers of the triumphant Marquis, heard high above the incessant clash of steel, and the screams and groans of the wounded, as he urged his men forward to one final, decisive attack. Colonel St. Lambert was at this instant endeavouring to force his way through the insurgent body that guarded the road nearest Nantes; but finding his efforts vain, he turned, like a stag at bay, and again encountered the Marquis face to face.

“Surrender!” said the Seigneur; “it is your only chance of life.”

“To a rebel?” replied St. Lambert, scornfully. “Never!”

Their swords were crossed in an instant. Both combatants were pretty equally matched in point of skill, and exhibited equal courage and determination of purpose, while their respective adherents, as if by a tacit agreement, paused in the work of death, to await the issue of the struggle. For some minutes, the result seemed doubtful; but at length, while aiming a deadly blow at his oppo-

ment's head, the Colonel's foot slipped ; his sword at the same instant was struck violently from his hand, and he was wholly at the mercy of his antagonist.

"I grant you your life," said the Marquis, with a grim smile ; "but you must yield yourself my prisoner."

"It is the fortune of war," exclaimed the crest-fallen St. Lambert, "and I have no alternative."

"And your men, too—they must lay down their arms, for further resistance, as you must perceive, is hopeless," rejoined the victor.

"Hopeless, indeed," observed the Colonel, with a sigh. "For myself, Monsieur, I demand no favour—I am your prisoner, and you may do with me as you will ; but for these gallant fellows"—looking round on his shrunken band, now reduced to about a hundred—"I trust, and indeed am certain, that you will treat them with the courtesy due to brave enemies."

"They are in arms against their King and country," sternly replied the Marquis ; "nevertheless, blood enough has been shed, and I have no wish, unless provoked, to push matters to extremities ; if your men, therefore, will lay down their arms, they are at liberty to depart, for I war not," he said, with an aristocratic *hauteur* that

overcame his better judgment—"I war not with such ignorant *canaille*, who are doubtless the mere blind dupes of more artful demagogues. But you, Colonel, are a dangerous adversary"—St. Lambert smiled at this indirect compliment to his military skill and courage—"and if we cannot win you over to our side—"

"Never!" interrupted the Colonel, indignantly.

"Well, then, we must at least take care to deprive you of the power of doing injury to our cause. But though you are my prisoner, you shall have the treatment due to a brave, but misguided enemy, and your parole, if you will accept it."

"I thank you for your courtesy," replied St. Lambert, "and accept it as frankly and readily as it is offered."

"And old Moustache there," continued the Seigneur, pointing to a veteran sergeant, whom he had observed to be particularly active and skilful in his dispositions during the fight, "he, too, must make up his mind to accompany you, for he is too experienced a soldier to be left at large with impunity. For the rest, I repeat, they are free to go."

The defeated conscripts, many of whom took but little interest in the service in which they had been enlisted, readily availed themselves of this

permission to depart; and the Marquis, accompanied by his two prisoners, and a small detachment of his troops, set out for the nearest village, where he intended to halt for the night, leaving the majority of the peasants behind him, to collect the arms, bury the dead, and administer such aid as was in their power, to the numerous wounded on either side.

When the news of this decisive victory got wind throughout the Bocage, and it became known that the Marquis de Chatillon, had openly taken the field, many of the Seigneurs began to follow his example; and, sometimes effecting a junction with each other, and sometimes acting separately, they kept the constitutional party in a constant state of anxiety. In consequence, attempts, generally unavailing, were made to disarm several of the parishes; as many republican reinforcements as could be collected were thrown into all the chief towns of the district, the municipal authorities being, for the most part, favourably disposed towards the new order of things; and imprisonments of suspected persons took place daily in all quarters, more especially along that line of coast where the brave and indefatigable Charette, who had not attempted a junction with any of the other Seigneurs, carried on his military operations.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was about a fortnight after the battle which has been just described, that the Marquis was chatting familiarly with Colonel St. Lambert, in the old-fashioned apartment where he was first introduced to the reader's notice. He was in high spirits, for his sturdy peasant-troops, who, according to their usual custom, had dispersed after the late engagement and returned, each to his own pursuit, had announced their readiness to reassemble in arms, and accompany their Seigneur to Bressuire, of which important town the Vendéans had just taken possession.

"I am sorry, Colonel," said the blunt but hospitable Marquis, "that I cannot offer you the amusement of a boar-hunt, as I had hoped to be able to do ; but you are aware that I have received

a summons to join D'Elbée and some of the chiefs at Bressuire ; and this is a summons that must not be neglected."

"A soldier's duties are, I am aware, imperative," coldly replied St. Lambert.

"I shall start to-morrow, shortly after day-break," continued the Marquis, "accompanied by as gallant a band as chief ever yet led to battle."

"Oh, of course—of course," said the Colonel, drily : "I can vouch for their bravery."

"While I am absent," resumed the Seigneur, "which will most probably be but for a short time, everything here will be at your disposal, and I trust that you will make yourself as much at home as you possibly can under the circumstances."

"Thanks for your hospitality," rejoined St. Lambert. "If anything could reconcile me to my lot, it would be your kindness."

"No thanks—no thanks," exclaimed the ardent Marquis. "I but act towards you as I am sure you would towards me, were our cases reversed. Besides, to confess a truth, Colonel, I am anxious to give the republican party no pretext for carrying on this disastrous war in the spirit of heartless and treacherous savages. They have already sins enough of that sort to answer for."

“No, no,” replied St. Lambert: “it is not we who have set the example of cruelty.”

“Pardon me, Colonel, but I have heard of the most wanton excesses committed by the republicans in the Marais—farm-houses burnt, crops laid waste, cattle slaughtered, men shot in cold blood after they had laid down their arms—and all because the brave Charette has refused to acknowledge the new-fangled systems of government attempted to be forced upon us at the point of the bayonet! Now I wish to shame your party into a more humane course of conduct. The idea may be quixotic, still I will not abandon it, but will act with forbearance and lenity towards all whom the chances of war may place in my power, till compelled by stern necessity to adopt a harsher line of proceeding. Civil war is bad enough in itself; there is no need to aggravate its horrors.”

“You are too severe on the troops of the constitution,” observed St. Lambert; “they have never yet acted otherwise than in self-defence.”

“Self-defence!” exclaimed the Seigneur, impetuously; “how so? Have you not been the aggressors throughout this accursed quarrel? Have you not commenced it yourselves by tampering with our local laws, customs, feelings, preju-

dices—with everything, in short, that we have held sacred for ages? Have you not persecuted our priests, insulted our nobles, and endeavoured to force our peasantry to take up arms against that monarchy under which they were born, and under which—despite your efforts—they shall die? How then can you talk of self-defence?”

“Well, be this as it may,” replied St. Lambert, “at least we are entitled to say that in all the recent changes we have made, or attempted to make, our object has been a patriotic one—namely, to render the benighted inhabitants of the Bocage free, happy, and enlightened.”

“Free? We are as free as we could wish to be. Happy? We were so, till you made us otherwise. Enlightened? Trust me, we are quite enlightened enough, to see the folly—the injustice—the madness—of the course of policy pursued by the republican faction here and elsewhere. I am really astonished, Colonel, that a brave, enlightened soldier like yourself can be so prejudiced in favour of a set of blustering demagogues—such, for instance, as your vaunted Girondists—who have not even the poor virtue of courage to recommend them.”

“It is you that are prejudiced, Marquis,

not we, who, discarding the false systems and superstitions that have enslaved us for ages, stand up boldly for the rights of man, and—”

“Rights of the fiend !” interrupted the Seigneur, passionately ; “don’t talk to me about the rights of man !”

“You are warm, Marquis, and presume on your situation,” said St. Lambert, with an air of grave rebuke.

“Excuse me, I was hasty, I admit ; but really, Colonel, it moves one’s spleen to hear this constant clatter about the rights of man—but let us drop the subject, for it is one on which agreement is hopeless.”

Discussions of this sort were of almost daily occurrence between the host and his guest, neither of whom would admit a point in favour of the other, but held tenaciously to his own opinion. In all other respects they agreed very well together, for each was brave, generous, and frank of nature, but the instant the demon of politics got possession of them, it was with difficulty they kept themselves within the limits of good-breeding ; the blunt, hasty, and choleric Seigneur, in particular, whose monarchical notions were of the most intolerant and arbitrary character, more than once broke out into absolute fury, so little accustomed

was he to the slightest opposition ; and had it not been for the tact and self-command of the Colonel, who was a disciplined man of the world, and respected, even while he condemned, his host's conscientious bigotry, their differences might have been decided by the sword.

“ When this accursed war is over,” said the Marquis, resuming the conversation, “ we shall both of us have more leisure and relish for each other's society, and then you shall see how the poor, benighted Vendean Seigneurs—as you think us—acquit themselves as friends and hosts.”

“ And you,” rejoined St. Lambert, resolved not to be outdone in courtesy, “ will, I hope, consent to become my guest at Laon, where you will find sportsmen not unworthy of the Bocage.”

They were thus gradually talking themselves into a most sociable mood, when voices, as of two people quarrelling, were heard without the door, which was slightly open ; and presently the veteran sergeant who, it may be remembered, had accompanied the Colonel to the château, addressing Pierre in terms of angry expostulation, said : “ I tell you I will be treated in this cavalier manner no longer ; you behave towards me just as if I were a dog, and when I ask you a civil question—”

“What right have you to be asking me questions at all? I don’t ask you any,” replied the surly *maître-d’hôtel*.

“No, you’d see me drop with fatigue before you’d so much as ask me to take a seat, and starve before your face before you’d ask me to take a mouthful of food.”

“Well, and suppose I would; what then?” exclaimed Pierre, coolly.

“What then?” said the indignant sergeant, dwelling on the words; “why then you’re no better than a savage, and not fit to be treated as a Frenchman; but I’d no right to expect kindness in a country where the inhabitants are afraid to face their enemies, but skulk behind hedges, and fire at them. If you knew anything of the usages of war—”

“The usages of war,” interrupted the *maître-d’hôtel*, “are not to be applied to a set of rascally *sans-culottes*, who are in arms against their King and country.”

The crusty old fellow spoke this with great bitterness, for he remembered his dispute with the Count de Sevrac’s valet Jacques, who, like the sergeant, had professed himself a *sans-culotte*, and had inflicted a deep wound on his self-conceit.

“By God, I will stand this no longer!” ex-

claimed the exasperated sergeant, and rushing forward into the presence of the Seigneur and his guest, he gave a full and circumstantial account of the insults and annoyances he had met with at the hands of Pierre; how he forbade the members of the household to hold communication with him, and studiously availed himself of every opportunity of subjecting him to the most humiliating course of treatment. "And at meal-times," added the veteran, by way of climax, "he reserves all the tit-bits for himself, and puts me off with the scraps; and while the whole of the servants sleep on beds, he forces me to take up with a sack."

"And quite good enough for a *sans-culotte*," said the *maître-d'hôtel*, who had followed him.

"How's this?" said the Marquis, addressing himself to Pierre, "have I not told you to treat the sergeant precisely as you do the other members of my household? Why am I day after day compelled to repeat this order?"

"I cannot," replied the *maître-d'hôtel* doggedly; "it goes clean against my conscience to do so."

"Indeed!" said the Colonel, smiling good-humouredly.

"Yes, indeed," rejoined Pierre, eyeing the speaker with no very pleasant expression of countenance; "he is a *sans-culotte*; and being so, he

is everything that is bad. Good treatment is thrown away on such a fellow."

"Fellow!" exclaimed the sergeant, his eyes flashing fire: "if it were not for the Colonel's commands to the contrary, I would long ago, unarmed as I am, have made you—"

"Come, come, old Moustache, no quarrelling," said the Marquis; "and you, Pierre, I insist on your treating him with courtesy: now go away, both of you, and let me hear no more complaints."

After the order had been twice repeated, and not till then, the disputants—each of whom fancied himself the aggrieved person, and was desirous to impress this fact on the Seigneur—thought fit to retire, the *maître-d'hôtel* muttering in an under-tone, as he closed the door behind him, that for all his master's orders, the rascally *sans-culotte* should have nothing but a sack to lie on!

"Pierre is getting old and crusty," said the Marquis to his guest, when they were again alone; "but his heart is in the right place."

"Maybe so," replied St. Lambert, drily; "but his manners, I think, are susceptible of improvement."

"Not a bit—not a bit," rejoined the Seigneur: "he is a rough diamond."

“ Very rough indeed,” said the Colonel.

“ And I thank God for it !” observed the Marquis. “ I detest your soft, yielding, smooth-spoken — Why, how now, Pierre ? Another quarrel ?”

This was said to the *maître-d’hôtel*, who just then threw open the door, and, by way of answer, informed the Marquis that his son had that instant arrived.

“ My son !” exclaimed the delighted Marquis, starting up from his seat; “ where is he ? He has just come in time. Where is he, Pierre ?”

“ Here !” said Alphonse, rushing forward into his father’s arms.

The Seigneur returned his son’s embrace with equal warmth, and, after the first excitement of the meeting was over, introduced him to Colonel St. Lambert, who, he stated, was residing with him, *en parole*.

At this intimation Alphonse started, and seemed chagrined and embarrassed ; he soon, however, recovered himself, while the Marquis proceeded to ask him a variety of questions respecting his residence in Paris, &c., to all which he gave ready and unreserved answers ; withholding only the circumstances of his strange *rencontres* with De Chantereau, which he kept for his father’s private ear.

“You have, indeed, had a narrow escape of your life,” said the elder De Chatillon, when his son had concluded his narrative; “and owe a lasting debt of gratitude to your friend Servette. But I think you said he was a republican—” and a shade of distrust here stole over the speaker’s countenance—“most likely, then, he had some interested motive in interfering with Danton on your behalf.”

“Not so,” replied Alphonse, warmly; “he is the noblest—the most disinterested of men.”

“Republican principles promote generosity of sentiment,” observed the Colonel. “You must not judge us too harshly,” he continued, with a smile; “for some of the most magnanimous and enlightened spirits in France are to be found in our ranks.”

“In *your* ranks!” said the Marquis, disdainfully: then correcting himself, he observed, in a more courteous tone: “There are no doubt some well-intentioned individuals to be found even among republicans, and that increases one’s regret that they should be so misguided. And how did you travel from Paris, Alphonse? Your journey, I take it, must have been a hazardous one.”

“Hazardous indeed!” replied the young man, “and not a little troublesome. I quitted the capital disguised as a *sans-culotte*, and to this

precaution I owe my life ; for the clamour against the aristocracy—that is to say, against every one who looked like a gentleman—was terrible in all the towns I passed through, till within twenty miles of Nantes, where, accordingly, I laid aside my costume for one more appropriate.”

“ I should have thought that disguise was more necessary at Nantes than at any other place, with the exception, perhaps, of Paris,” observed the Marquis ; “ for we hear that it is in a dreadful state of excitement.”

“ I found it so,” replied Alphonse ; “ but was fortunate enough to elude the vigilance of the authorities who, I learned, were hourly arresting people just as they pleased, without crime or charge.”

The young man did not add that in discarding his plebeian disguise, he was actuated by a natural desire to appear to advantage in the eyes of Annette, with whom he had fondly anticipated a renewal, if only for a day or two, of his old familiar intercourse ; in truth, he was in no mood to be communicative, for he had been grievously disappointed in his hopes, having learned, on presenting himself at M. Delille’s residence, that the old gentleman and his daughter, apprehensive of being arrested as suspected persons, had secretly

quitted Nantes about ten days before, with the intention, it was supposed, of taking refuge in England.

“And now,” resumed Alphonse, his eye kindling with animation, “now that I am returned, my whole soul shall be devoted to that great cause which has already found so many brave partizans in the Bocage. Henceforth, glory is my sole mistress, and I will either win renown in the field or die.”

“There spoke a true De Chatillon,” said the gratified parent. “To-morrow I set out for Bressuire, whither you shall accompany me ; and fear not, my boy, that you shall want an opportunity of achieving the distinction that you covet. But you mentioned the arrests at Nantes, just now, which reminds me of a report I heard, a day or two since, that some twenty or thirty of the best families in the neighbourhood—and among them, my old friend, M. Duchenier—had been imprisoned as suspected persons. Did you hear aught about them, when you were at Nantes?”

As Alphonse made no immediate reply to this question, his father fixed his eye full on him, and reading in his countenance evident confusion and embarrassment, his suspicions were at once awakened, and he said : “I see by your manner

you have some bad news to communicate ; tell me, is it not so ?”

“It is,” replied the young man, with visible reluctance ; “but I had better defer the communication till to-morrow.”

“No, no—this instant ; I insist on hearing it this instant,” said the impatient Seigneur ; “though I can guess its import. The parties in question have been subjected to the gross tyranny of the authorities, and visited with fines and exactions, as well as imprisonment.”

“Would to God the case were no worse !” exclaimed Alphonse, in tones of deep feeling.

“Ha ! say you so !” replied the Marquis, starting abruptly from his seat ; “worse, say you ? Speak, boy ; let me know the worst.”

Thus compelled to state what, for Colonel St. Lambert’s sake, he would fain have withheld, knowing well his father’s impetuous nature, he exclaimed, with a faltering voice : “I am sorry to say that twenty royalists were yesterday brought out into the public square of Nantes, and shot by a detachment of troops under the command of Captain Forestier, it was supposed, at the instigation of the municipality, who were anxious to strike terror into the minds of the citizens.”

This dreadful and unexpected news caused a

change in the Marquis's countenance and manner, that it was terrible to witness. He paced the room with fierce and rapid strides, a deep flush came over his cheeks, which was instantly succeeded by a ghastly paleness, while his flashing, dilated eye betokened the stormy passions that were at work within him.

"Shot—murdered in cold blood!" he exclaimed, starting back and clasping his hands passionately together; "the brave, the loyal, and the noble, butchered like sheep at the shambles! And my poor friend Duchenier, too, the gentlest and most peaceable of men, who had not the heart to harm. All murdered in cold blood, say you?"

"Be composed, father, I entreat you," said Alphonse, "the deed is done, and cannot be recalled."

"No; but it shall be avenged!" replied the Marquis, in a tone of thunder. "Murdered in cold blood!"—the idea seemed to act like a spell upon his fancy—"without trial—without condemnation—without even the semblance of justice! Curses on the wretches who have been guilty of this deed of blood! And who is this Forestier you spoke of?" he added, turning abruptly round to his son.

Colonel St. Lambert was about to reply to this

question, when Alphonse, who just then caught his eye, made a motion to him to be silent, and addressing his father, said: "I know nothing more of Captain Forestier, than that he was the officer who presided at the execution."

"And the cowardly assassin thinks himself, no doubt, a man of honour and courage," said the Seigneur, with a smile of bitter irony.

"Marquis de Chatillon," interposed the Colonel, making an effort to speak calmly, "I can make every allowance for your agitation, but permit me to say that Captain Forestier is my friend—"

"Ha, your friend!" interrupted the Marquis, fixing a terrible glance on the speaker.

"Yes, my friend," replied St. Lambert, firmly, "and incapable of acting either like a coward or an assassin."

"You approve his conduct, then!" said the Marquis, "and deem him justified in murdering people in cold blood! Now, by Heaven! I know not what prevents me from subjecting you to the same fate—"

"Father—father!" exclaimed the alarmed Alphonse, grasping the Seigneur by the arm, "you know not what you say! Remember, Colonel St. Lambert is your guest, and the honour of the De Chatillons is concerned in his safety; but

were it not so, one act of cruelty cannot justify another."

"No man can abhor these sanguinary deeds more than I do," observed the Colonel; "but as yet we have heard only one side of the question. I say thus much, not to bespeak your forbearance, but merely out of regard to my own sense of humanity and justice. For the rest, do with me as you please; I am unarmed, and at your mercy."

The calm, fearless, dignified manner in which this was said, produced an instant effect on the Marquis. The fierce expression of his countenance relaxed, and advancing towards his guest with an air of visible confusion and embarrassment, he exclaimed: "Colonel, forgive my harshness, and believe me, I had not the slightest intention of executing the threat I made use of; but the truth is, my mind was off its balance, and in the excitement of the moment I knew not what I said. This infernal civil war makes men forgetful, not only of the humanities, but even of the commonest courtesies of life."

Peace was immediately restored, and Alphonse, who had foreseen the probability of the rupture, the instant his father began speaking of the arrests at Nantes, took care to guard against the chance of its recurrence, by relating a variety of enter-

taining facts and anecdotes connected with his residence at Paris, which soon had the desired effect of restoring the Marquis, if not to cheerfulness, at least to good-humour.

Thus the evening wore away, and just as the party were about separating for the night, the elder De Chatillon, who had for some minutes preserved a studied silence, as though absorbed in busy thought, said: "Colonel St. Lambert, after the events of to-night, I feel that I owe you something more than a mere apology."

"My dear Marquis," replied the Colonel, with a courteous smile, "believe me, I am perfectly satisfied."

"But I am not," said the Seigneur, "and must be permitted to make reparation after my own fashion, and the only satisfactory way of doing so, that I can think of, is by releasing you from your parole. You look surprized, but mark me, Colonel, I grant you your freedom only on certain conditions."

"Name them," exclaimed St. Lambert, eagerly.

"In the first place," said the Marquis, "you must promise not to bear arms against us for the space of one whole year, by which time I trust this disastrous war will have been brought to a close."

"I willingly agree to your proposal," replied the Colonel, "for I never much fancied this thank-

less service, when one's only triumph is over one's own countrymen, and would infinitely sooner have joined Moreau on the Rhine against the Austrians. Now for your next condition."

"That you repair forthwith—say, to-morrow—to Nantes, insist on an interview both with the civil and military authorities, and tell both parties from me, that if they perpetrate one more such deed as they did yesterday on the imprisoned royalists, I will hang every man, woman, and child that may happen to fall into my clutches. Tell them this, and add, that there is not a Seigneur in all La Vendée who will not do the same. We are not men to be trifled with, Colonel, when the lives of our fellow-royalists are at stake."

"You could have intrusted me with no duty more consonant to my feelings," rejoined St. Lambert, "than that of interfering in the cause of humanity—but old Moustache, my veteran sergeant, he may accompany me, I presume?"

"Oh, certainly," replied the Seigneur, smiling; "if I do not hesitate to incur the responsibility of releasing you from your parole, I think I need not fear to liberate him, formidable as he may prove to us poor Vendéans."

When old Moustache—as the Colonel always called him—was informed that he was no longer to be subjected to the rigid surveillance of the

maître-d'hôtel, but was at liberty to depart with his master on the morrow, he expressed the liveliest satisfaction, and even made overtures of reconciliation to Pierre. But nothing could soften the feelings of that bigoted royalist, who looked on all republicans with horror, and in reply to the sergeant's expressions of courtesy, sneeringly observed that he had no such great cause for gratitude, for the Marquis ran not the slightest risk in allowing him to depart, inasmuch as his hostility could never do the slightest harm to the Vendéans.

"At any rate," replied the veteran, whose vanity was nettled by this sarcasm, "I feel grateful for the permission to quit for ever such an ignorant savage as yourself."

"Ay, ay, I'm savage enough, no doubt," said Pierre, whose powers of repartee were by no means of a first-rate quality, "but for all that, you shall have nothing but a sack to sleep on to-night."

Early next morning the party separated. Colonel St. Lambert and his sergeant took the road to Nantes, being duly provided with passes by the Seigneur, in the event of their being stopped by wandering bands of insurgents; and the Marquis and Alphonse set out for Bressuire, accompanied by an armed body of determined peasants, whose recent victory had inspired them with the utmost confidence.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN the Seigneur and his son, after a two days' march, reached Bressuire, they found it, as might have been expected, in a state of great commotion. The republicans, by whom it had been occupied, had, after massacreing several of the neighbouring peasantry, evacuated it in breathless haste, alarmed at the report of the numerous corps of insurgents that were advancing against it; and the town was now held by a powerful body of Vendéans, under the command of General d'Elbée. The streets were crowded, all the bells were ringing, and in the principal square there was a huge bonfire, in which the peasants were burning the republican tree of liberty, amid shouts of "Vive le Roi!"

The Marquis, whose person was familiar to many of the insurgents, was welcomed with enthusiastic acclamations as he passed with Alphonse through the streets; and his brave followers, who had all dispersed on entering the town, were received with hardly less cordiality.

In an open space near the principal church, several peasants, male and female, were collected, who were busily engaged in bedecking a large cannon of curious and elaborate workmanship, with flowers and ribands.

“Heyday! what is all this?” exclaimed the Marquis, halting as he reached the spot, not a little surprized at the nature of the occupation on which the party appeared so intent.

“You must come and embrace our Marie-Jeanne,” said some of the peasants, respectfully addressing the two De Chatillons.

“Marie-Jeanne, hey!” replied the Seigneur, laughing. “Truly, my friends, you have paid the fair sex a great compliment by bestowing a woman’s name on a twelve-pounder; but you are right—yes, you are right, for such noisy scolds are always of the feminine gender. And how did you become possessed of this delicate piece of ordnance?”

“We took her at Chollet, when Cathelineau

and Stofflet led us against the republicans there," said the person addressed; "and M. Putaud, the Curé, tells us that while she remains in our possession, we shall always be successful in battle. See how handsome she looks in her gay flowers and ribands!"

"Very becoming indeed!—a perfect Helen!" exclaimed Alphonse, gaily. "We must take care the republicans do not again fall in love with her good looks, and carry her off. As gallant Frenchmen, you know, we are bound to protect her at all hazards."

"Where is General d'Elbée?" inquired the Marquis, of a swarthy, hard-featured peasant, who was standing at his elbow.

"He went with M. Cathelineau towards the castle about half an hour ago," was the reply; and at Alphonse's request, the speaker immediately led the way in that direction, passing many an animated group of insurgents, some of whom were listening eagerly to the impassioned exhortations of a Curé, whilst others were relating the particulars of the recent surprize and defeat of St. Lambert, and others were kneeling before a crucifix, and crossing themselves with great apparent devotion.

At the castle whose walls, like those of the

town, were in a sad state of delapidation, they found the General in busy conversation with Cathelineau in the court-yard. He received the newcomers with all the frank cordiality of a soldier, congratulated the elder De Chatillon on his late victory, which, he said, had given an immense impetus to the royalist cause throughout the Bocage, and added: "you have just come in time, Marquis, to assist us with your counsel; my friend Cathelineau here is of opinion—"

"I am happy," interrupted the Seigneur, advancing towards the brave and unassuming peasant chief, "in this opportunity of becoming acquainted with one of the most gallant spirits in La Vendée."

The modest wool-dealer acknowledged this compliment with a respectful bow, and the General resumed:

"We have been examining the condition of this old castle, and debating whether it would be best to attempt to put it into something like a state of defence, and repair the more serious breaches in the walls of the town—which you are aware will occupy a great number of our men for days, perhaps weeks, to come—or march at once on Thouars with all our disposable forces, whither General Quetinau has retreated. Cathelineau is of opinion that we should make no delay, but the

instant Larochejaquelein, De Lescure, and Stofflet, arrive with their reinforcements—and we hourly expect them—that we should just give them sufficient time to recover from the fatigues of their march, and then hurry forward to Thouars. What is your advice, Marquis?”

“I agree with Cathelineau, that we should waste no time here, but strike a vigorous blow at once.”

“But what if we should happen to be repulsed,” said the cautious D’Elbée, “for our raw recruits, as you must be aware, are wholly unused to sieges.”

“But we shall not be repulsed,” exclaimed the ardent Seigneur.

“The capture of a town like Thouars would certainly be of infinite importance,” said the General, musingly, “and increase our moral influence as much as it would diminish that of the republicans; but then, on the other hand, a reverse, in the present ticklish state of our affairs, would be attended with the most ruinous consequences, for it would rouse the fears of hundreds who are just now well-disposed to join us, seeing the success that has hitherto attended our efforts.”

“And are we to be influenced in our movements by the doubts, the fears, and the scruples of timid and time-serving royalists,” exclaimed the Marquis, indignantly, “who will support the good

cause only when it prospers, and desert it the instant it meets with a check? Never! The alliance of such fair-weather friends is not worth a moment's consideration. 'Strike while the iron is hot,' is the principle on which my illustrious ancestor uniformly acted throughout his campaigns; and it is the principle on which we ourselves must now act, if we would keep possession of the vantage-ground we have obtained."

"We have men enough already for the assault of Thouars, and when our reinforcements arrive, we shall outnumber the enemy," suggested Cathelineau.

"No one doubts that we have men enough," observed D'Elbée, somewhat hastily.

"And well armed too, considering all circumstances," added the Marquis.

"Granted; but my good friend Cathelineau, who is but young in war yet, overlooks the paramount importance of previous training and discipline in affairs of this sort. A siege, you know, Marquis, is quite a different thing from a pitched battle in the field."

"Yet Chollet was captured by undisciplined troops," said Cathelineau, but in no boasting spirit, for he looked up to the General with marked respect, as being a man of some experience in military matters.

“ Well remembered,” exclaimed D’Elbée, “ and what has been done once may be done again. The attempt is hazardous, almost desperate ; but Thouars must be captured. Hark ! what mean those sounds ? ”

All listened attentively, and presently they heard loud shouts of “ Vive De Larochejaquelein ! ” “ Vive De Lescure ! ” accompanied by the beat of drums, the trampling of horse, and the discharge of several rounds of musketry.

D’Elbée’s eyes sparkled with joy.

“ Thank God,” he exclaimed, “ our friends have arrived ; I began to be apprehensive that they had been surprized by the enemy on their road. Let us go and bid them welcome,” and he hastened back into the town, followed by Cathelineau and the De Chatillons.

The two young chiefs on horseback were in the centre of the market-place, surrounded by hundreds of peasants, who were testifying the loudest joy at their opportune arrival, and pressing their hospitalities on the numerous body of tenantry by whom they were accompanied, and who appeared to be greatly fatigued with their march.

The instant Henri de Larochejaquelein and his cousin De Lescure perceived General d’Elbée and the Marquis, to both of whom they were known,

they dismounted, and running up to them, congratulated them on the promising state of affairs, observing with all the buoyant enthusiasm of youth and inexperience, that from the loyal spirit now generally prevalent in the Bocage, they had little doubt of being able to make a successful stand against the republicans.

“My life on it we shall win the day,” said the Marquis, exultingly, “for our friend Cathelineau here is himself a host.”

“What, is that the heroic conqueror of Chemillé, and who was the first to pull down the tri-color from the walls of Chollet?” inquired the cousins in a breath. “He is indeed a host!” and they embraced him with as much ardour as if he had been one of their oldest friends.

The Marquis then introduced Alphonse to their notice, as a volunteer soldier who had cast in his lot with theirs, and was delighted with the evident liking which the young men seemed to take to each other at the very first glance. But indeed it could scarcely have been otherwise, for all three were nearly of the same age, were of equal rank, and animated by the same love of glory. De Lescure and Alphonse, in particular, assimilated in every respect. Both were well-informed, mild of nature, cool and collected in the hour of danger,

and free from that bigoted intolerance which characterized so many of the royalists. De Larochejaquelein was of a more impetuous and mercurial temperament ; so enthusiastic that he seemed to love fighting — *more Hibernico* — for fighting's sake ; he was impatient of all counsels except such as encouraged his military ardour ; and so invariably sanguine as scarcely to believe in the possibility of reverses. His figure was tall and elegant ; he had light hair, and an oval countenance, whose contour was rather English than French ; and there was a dash of eccentricity in his costume, inasmuch as he usually wore several red handkerchiefs—one on his head, another about his neck, and three or four round his waist, holding his pistols.

After dismissing their retainers, many of whom had some difficulty in finding accommodation, the town being by this time full to overflowing, the chiefs proceeded to the quarters provided for them in the spacious mansion of one of the municipal authorities, where they partook of a frugal meal, and spent the rest of the day in discussing their plan of operations. Before he retired to rest for the night, the careful General made the circuit of the town in company with Cathelineau, in order to satisfy himself that the numerous sentinels whom he had caused to be stationed at the gates

and elsewhere, to prevent the egress of any one who might carry to Thouars the news of the intended attack, were on the alert at their different posts.

During the greater part of the next day, small bodies of peasants kept continually pouring in, laden with such provisions as they could spare from their scanty stores. And in the evening the forces intended for the expedition were assembled, by order of D'Elbée, under their respective chiefs, and told to get everything in readiness—arms, ammunition, artillery, &c.—to march at night-fall to the attack of Thouars. This order was welcomed with exultation by the ardent Vendéans, and by none more so than by Stofflet—one of the bravest but rudest and most merciless of the peasant leaders, who had already signalized himself by his courage and brutality at Chollet, and had arrived at Bressuire in the course of the forenoon, eager for another opportunity of again attacking the republicans, of whose excesses he had been an eye-witness, and whom he regarded with perfect detestation.

From the moment that the General's orders were issued, all was stir and bustle throughout the town. The streets echoed to the clatter of horses' hoofs, and the rumbling of the few pieces of

artillery that the Vendéans possessed ; boys and girls in parties of six or eight went about chaunting the rude old loyal songs and ballads of the district ; the shops were filled with gossips speculating on the chances of the expedition, and listening to, and in turn spreading, all sorts of rumours on the subject ; messengers were hurrying to and fro in all directions ; and the churches were crowded with old men, women and children, who, on their knees before the cross, were offering up their prayers for the success of the enterprize.

So the hours rolled on, until the last glimmer of day had faded from the west, and night had sunk down on earth. A solitary cannon fired from the market-place, now gave signal that the important moment had arrived ; and it was an imposing spectacle to behold the different divisions, with their bright arms gleaming in the torch-light, and their broad red-cotton scarfs, and snow-white flags, aiding not a little the picturesque effect of the scene. It was an imposing sight to see these divisions get into marching order, and move in long and steady array through the streets of Bressuire, towards the gate that opened on the narrow, winding road to Thouars, where hundreds of the wives and daughters, who had followed them thus far, took leave of them with mingled feelings of

hope and fear, but could not refrain from looking back every four or five yards to wave once more farewell to those who might never return.

The General's numerous division led the way ; next came the Marquis de Chatillon's, which was the best armed of them all ; then De Larochejaquelein's and De Lescure's, followed by the small, hardy band who acknowledged Cathelineau and Stofflet as their leaders, and many of whom bore nothing but scythes and pitchforks ; and the cavalcade was closed by the redoubtable Marie-Jeanne and six pieces of ordnance. As for the chiefs, they sometimes marched at the head of their detachments, and sometimes fell back into the rear, and conversed together on the approaching conflict, which was one well calculated to engross their thoughts and call forth all their energies, for more important results depended on it than on any action that had yet been fought.

“By this time to-morrow,” said Henri de Larochejaquelein, addressing his cousin De Lescure and Alphonse, who were walking with him at the head of his detachment, “by this time to-morrow the white flag will be floating in triumph from the walls of Thouars ; for our troops are in the highest spirits, and what they want in skill and discipline, they supply by numbers and courage.

How gallantly, Alphonse, your father's brave retainers move forward ! There is no feebleness—no hesitation in their carriage ; they press on as to a certain victory.”

“ And a victory it cannot fail to be,” exclaimed Alphonse, with energy, “ if there be firmness in the heart, or strength in the sword of a De Chatillon.”

“ Your father,” answered Henri, gaily, “ has already shown us what can be done by a De Chatillon.”

“ And it is now my turn,” replied Alphonse. “ Heaven knows how ardently I have longed for such an opportunity as the present to strike a blow in the cause of royalty. You, too, I well know, are equally earnest in that cause ; but to feel as I do, you should have been an eye-witness of what took place at the Tuileries, when the palace was ransacked by a ferocious mob of robbers and assassins, and even the high courage and lofty bearing of the Queen could not protect her from the grossest insults.”

“ Oh, that I had been present on that occasion !” exclaimed Henri, with flashing eyes. “ To have fought to the last gasp in defence of my Queen—and such a Queen !—would have been the proudest object of my ambition.”

“ ’Twas a dreadful spectacle Paris presented on that night,” observed De Lescure, “ and one that I shall never forget to my dying day. I made more than one attempt to enter the palace, but ’twas impossible ; and finding like you, Alphonse, that I could be of no further use in the capital, I quitted it immediately, though not without difficulty, greater even than you seem to have experienced.”

“ You need hardly regret your absence from the Tuileries on the night in question, Henri,” said Alphonse, “ for your single arm there could have done no good, while here, in the Bocage, where the name of De Larochejaquelein is known far and wide, you may exert a moral influence calculated to be of infinite service to royalty.”

“ Alphonse says truly,” rejoined De Lescure : “ if the throne is ever to be re-established, it is here that the attempt must be made. From the woods and wilds of La Vendée must issue the voice that shall rouse the drooping spirits of the royalists throughout France.”

“ That is to say, if Providence permits,” observed D’Elbée, who at this moment joined the party. “ Remember, my young friends, we are but blind instruments in its hands, as I take care to impress on the minds of my men.”

It was one of the General's peculiarities to affect on all occasions an appearance of extreme devotion, though perhaps it is hardly just to say that he affected it, for his whole career shows that the turn of his mind was strictly religious. At times, however, he carried the feeling to an inordinate degree; he wore, like Louis XI., images of saints about his person; often delivered long, prosy sermons and addresses to his soldiers; and was so continually making use of the word "Providence," that the peasants, much as they respected him for his piety—which, as he well knew, was one of the main reasons of his influence over them—were often tempted to laugh outright in his face, and gave him the nickname of "General Providence."

De Larochejaquelein, who had been informed of D'Elbée's foible by Cathelineau—for it had been somewhat ostentatiously exhibited to his men during their brief halt at Bressuire—whispered laughingly to Alphonse: "Monsieur D'Elbée will serve the royal cause much more effectually by his sword than his sermons."

The General overhearing this remark, shook his head at the thoughtless speaker, and said in a grave but good-natured tone, "Young man, when you have seen as much military service as I

have, you will know that it is the policy of a commander, especially when he has to do with such men as our Vendean peasantry, to take every means in his power of encouraging a religious feeling among his troops."

"I agree with you, General," observed the thoughtful De Lescure, "for that soldier is generally a brave and determined one, and may be relied on in all emergencies, who is of a religious frame of mind, and sets their proper value, and no more, on life and its pursuits. Where was there ever a more devout—I should rather say fanatical—army than that of Cromwell? and yet these men, as English history assures us, triumphed over the bravest and most disciplined troops of the monarchy."

"True," replied D'Elbée, "and if the religious spirit could sustain them against all opposition in such a cause as they upheld, what ought we not to expect it to do in a cause like ours? Believe me, Henri, a good soldier will fight none the worse for believing in a superintending Providence."

"I believe it," replied De Larochejaquelein, somewhat gravely, "and I am quite ready to concede the point. I am no reasoner, but a rude unlettered soldier, and would at the present time rather fight than argue."

“ I remember some years ago,” observed the General, “ hearing an officer of Lafayette’s corps, in America, declare that the best soldier he ever met in his life was also one of the devoutest, and that Washington placed such confidence in him as to intrust him with secrets which he withheld even from his most familiar associates.”

“ Then,” said Henri, resuming his gaiety, “ we should act wisely if we were to raise a regiment of curés, and make them substitute sharp swords for blunt, sleepy sermons.”

This was said of course in joke, but the General, whose perceptions of the jocular were somewhat obtuse, and whose intelligence in other respects was by no means so remarkable as his bravery and singleness of character, considered it in the light of a serious suggestion, and replied. “ When Providence deems such a scheme advisable, we may depend on it that He will see to its fulfilment.”

“ I trust,” said Alphonse, devoutly, “ that He will approve our scheme of driving the republicans from Thouars to-morrow.”

“ And wherefore not ?” replied D’Elbée. “ It pleased Providence the other day to inspire Cathelineau with the determination to capture Chollet, and help himself to all the arms and ammunition he found there.”

“The republicans would tell you, General,” said Henri, who, though religiously disposed himself, could not tolerate the mannerism of D’Elbée, “that the devil had the greatest share in that suggestion.”

Wishing to change the conversation, De Lescure observed to Alphonse: “We could hardly have had a finer night for our march; this bright moon and keen, bracing wind have evidently quite an exhilarating effect on our men.”

“We could not have anticipated such a night from the cloudy, unsettled look of the sky at sunset,” replied Alphonse, “and so far, fortune favours our enterprize. What time does the day break?”

“Between four and five o’clock, as I am informed,” observed D’Elbée.

“By which time,” said De Larochejaquelein, “our musketry will be rattling, I hope, about the ears of Quetinau, who doubtless expects our attack, and like an old soldier, is prepared to give us a warm reception.”

Cathelineau here came up, and respectfully addressing the General, said: “I have just been speaking to Stofflet and the Marquis de Chatillon, who are both of opinion that we should do well

to give our men a short rest, for we are now more than half-way to Thouars, and some few of our younger soldiers are already beginning to show symptoms of fatigue."

"Indeed!" said the General, "then by all means let the men rest awhile, for an hour's delay is of no great consequence, and they will need all their vigour when they reach Thouars. Gentlemen, be good enough to repair to your respective divisions, and give the word to halt."

In a few minutes the entire body of Vendéans were scattered in groups about the short rough grass of a small plain, which extended on either side of the road for some four or five hundred yards, and afforded them a welcome resting-place, the night being perfectly dry and the wind fresh without being chilly. Here they drew out the bread and fruits with which the care of their friends at Bressuire had furnished them, and made a hearty impromptu repast; after which many of them stretched themselves full length on the ground, and fell fast asleep—not, however, altogether from fatigue, for the peasantry of the Bocage were, generally speaking, a hardy, athletic race inured from childhood to toils which would have knocked up less practised pedestrians, especially when the state of their craggy, serpentine, up-and-

down roads is considered, which they thought nothing of traversing for hours together, in large compact bodies, on their sporting expeditions, encumbered with guns, provision bags, and weighty poles, braving alike the summer's scorching heat and the heavy spring and autumn rains, which frequently converted the roads into so many water-courses, along which a traveller, unused to the district, would have found it almost impossible to make his way. It was not so much from fatigue, therefore, that many of the Vendéans now fell asleep, as from long exposure to the night-air which is often as great a provocative to slumber as a long journey; and while some slept, others, too much excited for repose, conversed together in low tones. The chiefs from time to time mingled familiarly among them, for, strange to say, quite a republican spirit prevailed in the royalist army, and such men as Cathelineau and Stofflet, notwithstanding their plebeian birth, were placed on a footing of perfect equality with the Seigneurs, who on all occasions paid the utmost deference to their opinions.

“Pass but a few short hours,” said De Lescure, who was seated with his cousin and Alphonse on a small grassy mound by the road's side, “and hundreds of these brave fellows round us, whose

pulses now beat high with health, will be sleeping the long sleep of death, which no summons to the field of glory shall ever have power to break." .

"Very true," replied Henri, coolly; "the enemy no doubt will give many of us our quietus; but what then? We cannot die more satisfactorily than sword in hand at the head of the division."

"Yet it is painful to think," continued De Lescure, "that it is against our own countrymen we go forth to battle, and that whoever falls, must fall by the hand of a Frenchman."

"My cousin," said De Larochejaquelein, addressing Alphonse, "is just now in one of his moralizing moods; he is very subject to such fits—as I call them—and whenever they occur, he is sure to be as gloomy as one of our woods on a starless night. You must not mind what he says, or perhaps you, too, will catch the infection."

"I do not wonder," exclaimed Alphonse, "that De Lescure is filled with painful thoughts at the idea of Frenchmen struggling to the death against Frenchmen; I, also, had many sad moments when first I contemplated the probability of such an unnatural strife, but the revolting scenes that I have witnessed myself, and heard

of elsewhere, together with my conviction that the republicans will never be satisfied till they have reduced France to the lowest state of degradation, have quite reconciled me to the necessity of civil war, dreadful as I allow it to be. Besides, I cannot but feel that the time for thought has passed, and that of action has arrived."

"Too true—too true," replied De Lescure, starting up abruptly, as if to shake off his despondency, "the season of reflection has indeed passed and it is idle to grieve now for what cannot, either in honour or justice, be avoided."

"Who talks of grieving, with the prospect of such a triumph as awaits us at Thouars?" exclaimed the Marquis de Chatillon, who arrived just as De Lescure was speaking. "It will be time enough to grieve when there is no longer a peasant in the Bocage whom we can rally under the white flag, or a rood of ground we can call our own."

"I was merely expressing my sorrow," observed De Lescure, "that it should be our lot to draw our swords against Frenchmen, instead of against a foreign foe."

"Frenchmen!" said the blunt old Seigneur, "the republicans are not Frenchmen, but the deadliest enemies France ever had. They lost

all claim to be considered as our fellow-countrymen, when they raised their hands against their King, and abolished the sacred privileges of the aristocracy. Frenchmen ! I utterly repudiate them as such, and shall never be satisfied till the whole vile faction is swept from the face of the country. I never knew but one of the squad who had the slightest pretensions—and they were slender enough—to the character of a man of sense and honour.”

“You mean Colonel St. Lambert,” said Alphonse.

“I do ; and I should not at all wonder if I were mistaken even in him, for they are all alike—a set of unprincipled, bloodthirsty desperadoes, only to be put down by such arguments as proceed from the cannon’s mouth.”

“Right, Marquis,” observed Henri, “and we will set Marie-Jeanne to argue with them to-morrow, and see what effect she will have. If her logic, backed by our own good swords, don’t convince them, their understandings must indeed be proof against all strong reasoning.”

This sally greatly diverted the Marquis, who clapping his young friend on the shoulder, replied : “Well said, Henri, well said ; did you hear that, Alphonse ? Your tutor, I’ll answer for it, with

all his learning, never made a remark half so sensible. But come, let us see what the General is about, though I can pretty well guess how he is occupied just now," and he led the way through bodies of sleeping peasants towards that part of the plain where D'Elbée's division had stationed themselves. Here, as he had anticipated, he found their leader standing in the midst of his men, delivering an exhortation in which the strangest and most contradictory sentiments were jumbled together, and the warrior and the pastor appeared nearly equally conspicuous. The majority of the men listened with earnest attention, more especially to those passages which had a warlike tendency, which they acknowledged by a low stern murmur of approbation; but Henri, after slyly whispering to the Marquis that the General's eloquence made him drowsy, moved away to the distance of a few yards, flung himself on the ground, and in a few minutes was wandering in the phantom-peopled land of sleep. The Seigneur was not slow to follow his example, for though, like most of the Vendean nobles, he was punctual in the fulfilment of his religious duties, his zeal was by no means ardent, and under existing circumstances, he thought there was far more virtue in a sharp-edged sword than in a dull sermon.

When the General had concluded his prolix exhortation, Alphonse and De Lescure, who had both been patient listeners, stepped up to him, and observing that the heavy masses of black clouds began gradually to break away in the east, expressed their opinion that it was time the march was resumed, as the men must be now sufficiently recruited.

“It will not be long before day breaks,” said Stofflet, joining them, “and time is too precious to be wasted in preaching,” he added in an undertone to De Lescure. “M. d’Elbée should remember that he is not a parish priest but the leader of an army. Come, General, no more halting; we have not a moment to lose, if we wish to surprize Thouars, and take a glorious revenge on the murderers of our brave peasants.”

“Be it as you wish, my friend,” said D’Elbée: “bid the buglers sound to arms.”

In an instant all was stir and bustle. The men started to their feet refreshed with their brief halt, and the whole spot teemed with active, noisy, energetic life, which but a minute before was wrapped in deep repose. The Marquis de Châtillon was among the last to shake off the slumber into which the night-air, assisted, probably, by the General’s narcotic eloquence, had plunged him;

he rubbed his eyes, looked vacantly about him, and thinking he was at one of his favourite boar-hunts, he said: "Guard well the outskirts of the thicket—ready with your spears, men—the brute will rush forth presently;" then, as he saw the vast body marching briskly forward, and De Les-cure and Alphonse standing by his side, he became instantly conscious of his situation, and jumped up with all the alacrity of a young man. "Now for Thouars!" he exclaimed in his cheerfullest tones; "remember, we must breakfast there, and no doubt the walk and the hard-fighting will give us a pleasant appetite for the meal."

With renewed strength and spirits the Vendean army pressed forward, and with more order and regularity than they had yet maintained, which increased as the distance lessened between them and the town whither they were bound. The chiefs now placed themselves, each at the head of his respective body of adherents, with the single exception of the Marquis, who kept bustling about in all directions, chatting, now with this peasant, and now with that, hurrying from detachment to detachment, and delighting all by his blunt cordial manner, and the utter absence of assumption that characterized everything he said and did.

The day had fully broke, though heavy mists

yet hung on the face of the landscape, when the leading division of the Vendean troops came within sight of Thouars. Alphonse, who had quitted his detachment a few minutes before, and was walking beside the General putting to him some questions respecting the approaching siege, was the first to descrie, dimly gleaming through the silvery vapours, the towers of the principal church in the town, and with a throbbing breast and flashing eye, he pointed out the object to his companion. Well might the young royalist chief have exulted, for the season of action for which he had so long panted, had arrived, and he had at length an opportunity of gloriously distinguishing himself! Before the sun, which was now climbing up the eastern sky, had attained its meridian, he felt assured that he should either have “won his spurs”—to borrow a phrase from chivalry—as a gallant and skilful soldier, or lie stretched in death amid heaps of slaughtered republicans. But youth seldom anticipates the worst, and confident in his fortune Alphonse only expected triumph.

“Look, Alphonse, look!” exclaimed the ardent De Larochejaquelein, rushing up to him, his face flushed with excitement, as he pointed with his drawn sword towards the church tower, “there is a

sight that might infuse youth and strength into the heart of age itself! Within the walls of yonder town we shall soon find either a soldier's grave, or exult in a soldier's victory."

While he was speaking, the loud clang of the alarm-bell, accompanied by a flourish of martial music, came wafted on the wind towards them.

"Hark, they are ringing the tocsin!" said the General, "and must be fully prepared for—"

"Say, rather, they are ringing their own knell," interrupted the impetuous Henri.

The Vendéans had by this time arrived within such distance of the town, that it was distinctly visible to them all. They could even hear the barking of the dogs, and the shrill crowing of the early cock; and it was with no little difficulty that the chiefs prevented them, in the sudden excitement of the moment, from rushing forward in an irregular, tumultuous body, and so perilling all their chances of success, which depended as much on discipline as on courage. Cathelineau's detachment was the most excited, for they remembered Chollet and Chemillé, and thought that the town before them was to be captured in the same manner by a desperate, immethodical assault, without the slightest regard to any of the rules of war; but their more wary leader emphatically

warned them that, in the present case the enemy were fully prepared for the attack, and consequently they had need to temper bravery with discretion, and to exercise all their foresight. Even these exhortations would have failed of their effect, had not the rough, stern Stofflet, who saw the ardent excitement under which Cathelineau's division laboured, burst forth into the van, and drawing a pistol from his sash, threatened to shoot the first man who should advance a single step till ordered.

The town of Thouars, which was garrisoned by a pretty large body of republican troops, is situated on a height, nearly surrounded by the river Thoué, at which all the roads terminate, with the exception of those from Saumur and Poitiers. The besiegers, therefore, must of necessity cross this stream—a troublesome and somewhat difficult task, inasmuch as it ran between deep banks, and was not fordable. But the chiefs, most of whom knew the locality well, had skilfully arranged their plans beforehand, and it was determined to attempt the passage at four different points. Henri and his cousin De Lescure, together with, at his earnest request, the younger De Chatillon, were to cross it at a bridge which was some hundred yards from the town near the village of Vrine ; Cathelineau, at the bridge of St. Jean, which reached close up to

the walls; and the remaining Seigneurs at two other points of passage.

“Now, Alphonse,” said the Marquis, as he prepared to set off to his allotted post, “remember your grandfather, and this day show yourself worthy of him.”

“Adieu, Marquis,” said Henri, gaily, “we shall meet again shortly within the walls of Thouars.”

“That is, if Providence vouchsafes to grant us the victory,” added D’Elbée, reverently crossing himself; “but the day draws on—quick, gentlemen, to your posts; and may God prosper the good cause!”

While the besieging army were thus preparing for an instant attack, the besieged on their part had not been inactive. Though by no means assured of the fact, yet General Quétinau had calculated on the advance of the victorious royalists, thinking it highly improbable that they would rest satisfied with their success at Bressuire, and accordingly had made every disposition in his power to put the town into a state of available defence. But Thouars, though at that time as busy and populous a place as any in La Vendée, was by no means strongly fortified, for the wall that surrounded it was old, and in places decayed, and being without either ditch or trench,

it could have been battered down without any great difficulty, had the Vendéans possessed a sufficient quantity of artillery. Throughout the greater portion of the night, Quetinau, like a skilful soldier, was busied with his arrangements, and gave no slight offence to some of the more pacific citizens—who, though inclined to republicanism, were anything but zealous in the cause—by compelling them to assist him in his operations, and seizing their carts and waggons, and in some instances even their massive articles of household furniture, in order to pile them up as barricades against those parts of the wall which offered the weakest defence against the enemy. Not content with these precautions, he sprung a mine just outside one of the principal gates of the town in the direction whence he expected the Vendéans; and as the night wore away, stationed sentinels at certain elevated points, who might give him the earliest information of their approach, so that his forces might be all in readiness at their different posts.

The town clocks were striking six, when the division commanded by the three young friends issued from the village of Ligrón, which is situated on a height facing the bridge of Vrine. Two republican battalions defended this bridge, and

had taken the precaution of making a barricade, "formed of a cart and some dung," says one of the chroniclers of the period, "and they had also artillery in a good position." The instant they perceived the advance of the Vendean column, with its three or four pieces of cannon, they opened a furious fire, which was returned with great spirit by the besiegers from the height. For some time this cannonade continued unabated on both sides, till at length the powder of the royalists began to fail them, and Henri de Larochejaquelein hurried off to some of the other divisions for such supply as they could afford, leaving De Lescure and Alphonse in command. The latter's patience now seemed as though it would desert him altogether; he saw many of his troops dropping about him, while, to all appearance, the fire of the column had as yet produced no decided impression on the enemy; and panting for an opportunity to distinguish himself in a hand-to-hand fight, which he felt was the only way to bring the affair to a speedy issue, he determined on the experiment of an advance.

"Forward!" he exclaimed, waving his sword above his head, and shouting to his men at the very top of his voice; "forward, my friends! or Cathelineau's division will enter the town before us!"

Thus speaking, and accompanied by De Lescure, the ardent young Seigneur descended rapidly from the height, and soon gained the middle of the bridge, amid a heavy shower of balls and case-shot, which the republicans, astonished and enraged at his audacity, poured in on him with desperate determination.

Unfortunately, one of those momentary panics, which it is well known will at times seize the bravest troops, had just now taken such absolute possession of the peasants, that not a man dared to follow the two chiefs. Both accordingly returned, their clothes fairly riddled with shot, and conjured their followers, in the most impassioned terms, not to desert the good cause, and disgrace themselves for ever.

“Are you men?—are you Frenchmen?” exclaimed the almost distracted Alphonse; “have you hearts beating in your bosoms? Have you wives and children, in whose eyes you would not be dishonoured? Oh! by these strong, these sacred ties, I entreat—I implore you to shake off this unworthy fear!”

“Hark! do you not hear the exulting shouts of the enemy?” added De Lescure. “Shame on this unmanly spirit! Rouse yourselves—

quick ! follow me across the bridge, and I promise you a certain victory."

Still, not a man stirred ! They stood, staring apparently quite stupified at each other ; where-upon Alphonse, whispering gloomily in his young friend's ear : " All is lost ! But I, at least, will not survive the disgrace of this day !" again rushed forward, sword in hand, followed only by De Les-cure and two peasants.

At this critical moment Henri returned, with a small supply of powder for the men. He saw his cousin and Alphonse—the forlorn-hope, as they might be called of the division—forcing their way across the bridge, almost wholly unsupported, in the face of a tremendous fire from the republicans ; and reading at a glance how matters stood, upbraided the Vendean bitterly for their cowardice, and then, without more delay, hurried on at his utmost speed to the assistance of his brother chiefs, whose danger he felt was imminent.

Gradually this small heroic band succeeded in making their way along the narrow bridge, at the end of which was an entrenchment, and behind it were posted a considerable body of the republicans. Scarcely had they reached this position, when the Vendean soldiers, shocked at their late

unaccountable pusillanimity, and anxious to make every possible atonement for it, came thundering down, like a torrent, from the height, with fierce exulting shouts; and, rapidly crossing the bridge, arrived at the entrenchment just as their brave leaders had succeeded in getting over it, and were engaged in desperate but unequal conflict with the enemy.

“They come—they come!” exclaimed Alphonse delightedly to Henri, who was fighting by his side; “thank God, they have recovered from their panic! Hurrah! the day is ours!” and, with renewed energies of mind and body, he cut his way into the very thick of the republicans, followed close by the foremost body of the royalists, who, by dint of sheer physical pressure, had broken down the barricade. While the young De Chatillon was thus engaged, Henri and his cousin halted for a few minutes, to get the remainder of the division into something like order, and then bore down to the aid of their companion, the furious impetuosity of whose assault was carrying all before it.

The battle now raged with the utmost fierceness, and nothing could exceed the desperate determination of the Vendéans, which formed a striking contrast to their late behaviour. Disregarding the

murderous fire which the enemy kept up against them, and too much excited to return it with any steadiness, they dashed forward with their pikes, swords, and bayonets, trusting to these, and these only, for success. Checked more than once by the volleys of musketry, which made fearful havoc among them, they never failed to rally instantly, and at length getting close wedged in among the republicans, who were already disheartened by the loss of many of their superior officers, they drove them in disorder towards the town.

Alphonse was foremost in pursuit, borne headlong on by his boiling courage, and at the head of a small detachment of about a hundred men, came up with the enemy just as they had entered the gates, which were immediately closed behind them. All further advance being thus abruptly checked, the young chief dispatched a peremptory order to those who were in command of the artillery to hasten down with it from the height, hoping that there might be ammunition enough left to load at least one or two pieces of cannon ; and then calmly awaited the coming up of the main body of the division, regardless of the fire which the enemy still continued to pour in on his detachment from the walls.

In a few minutes, Henri and De Lescure arrived

with the remainder of the column, and were consulting with Alphonse upon the best and speediest means of forcing an entrance, when, suddenly a loud rumbling sound, as of thunder, was heard proceeding from a distant quarter of the town, a sharp, hissing, crackling noise followed, and then a broad, bright flash of light burst from the rent earth, like fire from the active crater of Vesuvius. At the same moment, vast masses of solid brickwork were shot high up into the air, and came down again with a terrific crash, split into a thousand fragments; and screams and yells of agony arose, mingled with wild shouts of exultation and defiance, that froze the very heart's-blood of all who heard them. A mine had exploded, and a great portion of Cathelineau's division were nought but bloody and mangled corpses, with a black wreath of sulphurous smoke hanging above them as a funeral pall!

For an instant or so the young chiefs, with the entire body under their command, stood perfectly inactive, as though transfixed with horror; but soon a sterner spirit prevailed, and Alphonse, who was the first to recover his self-possession, sheathed his sword, and snatching a huge axe from the hands of a peasant who stood near him, rushed

with it to the walls, and began thundering at the decayed brick-work with all his might. He was quickly followed by hundreds of the Vendéans who kept battering away with pikes, bludgeons, and the butt-ends of their heavy muskets; but finding their utmost efforts unavailing, Henri, mounting on the shoulders of a peasant, clambered up to the top of the wall, "where," observes the principal historian of this disastrous civil war, "it was most dilapidated, and with his hands began pulling down the stones, exposed to the enemy's fire, and at last contrived to make a kind of breach, through which his troops scrambled into the town."

Alphonse and De Lescure were at their head, and pressed vigorously forward, notwithstanding the desperate resistance made by the enemy; while Henri, taking an offered white flag from one of the peasants, who was at that moment forcing his way through the breach, waved it above him with a loud shout of triumph, and then planted it with his own hands on the wall!

"One struggle more, my men," he exclaimed, "and Thouars, like Bressuire, is our own!—so press on—press on. The General, no doubt, has already forced an entrance into the town, and—"

Loud cheers from the Vendéans, all of whom

had now succeeded in scrambling through the breach, interrupted his further speech ; and jumping down from the wall, the brave young royalist, closely followed by his men, hurried after his brother chiefs, to whose progress the inhabitants of the town, though favourably disposed towards the republicans, offered not the slightest opposition, but contented themselves with shutting up their shops ; while some stood coolly staring at the besiegers in their door-ways, and others cast furtive glances at them through the windows, indifferent apparently as to the turn which events might take.

Pursued from street to street with an activity and determination of purpose that allowed them no time for rallying, the shrunk battalions opposed to De Lescure's and his cousin's division, soon lost all heart, more especially when they received no reinforcement from Quetinau, and ascertained from the loud cries of "Vive le Roi !" which momentarily increased in animation, that other quarters of the town had also been forced by the victorious Vendéans. Still they made a show, however faint, of resistance ; and on reaching a large open space in front of the principal church, whither their few surviving officers had directed them to retreat, in the hope that there, as a central point,

they might find a republican force posted, they were cheered by the sight of a compact body of troops, with General Quetinau in command, who had been drawn together into the town from some of the approaches which they had striven, but in vain, to defend. A terrific struggle here ensued—the struggle of reckless desperation on the one side, of vigorous and exulting confidence on the other. Alphonse and De Lescure, together with Henri de Larochejaquelein, who had now come up with them, charged at the head of three separate detachments at one and the same instant; but the republicans, excited by the appeals and encouraged by the example of Quetinau, who fought on foot in the van, beat them back with no inconsiderable loss, for they were superior both in numbers and discipline to the division opposed to them. Nowise dismayed by this repulse, the young chiefs rallied their troops without loss of time; and Henri singling out an officer who had made himself conspicuous in the *mêlée* by his skill and daring, rushed up to him, and after the exchange of a few thrusts, stretched him dead at his feet with a furious sword-cut which penetrated clean through the red cap of liberty which he wore in bravado, and absolutely clove his skull.

The fall of one of their bravest leaders produced

a striking effect on the squadron he commanded. With a howl of passion, as if so many wild beasts were suddenly let loose, they flung themselves upon Henri's column, and again bore it back several yards ; while a shattering volley of musketry poured in on the detachment which Alphonse and De Lescure headed, by a corps which Quetinau had hitherto kept as a reserve, completed the confusion of the Vendéans. The republican General, availing himself of the auspicious opportunity, now commanded the entire body of his troops to advance ! On swept the mighty mass, like a spring-tide, the solid earth shaking beneath their tread—on they swept, bounding like bloodhounds on their prey, with fierce shouts of “ Vive la Liberté ! ” “ Vive la République ! ” hewing down the royalists by scores, and resolute neither to give nor accept quarter.

Hemmed in by the restricted space in which they fought, and having no opening for retreat, but that which was afforded them by one or two streets, by no means remarkable for width, the defeat—say, rather, the annihilation—of the Vendean division seemed inevitable ; but, fortunately, at that critical moment, loud cheers of triumph announced the approach of a reinforcement, and presently D'Elbée and the Marquis appeared,

covered with dust and blood, and accompanied by a gallant detachment who had just defeated with crushing loss the corps which Quetinau had left to oppose their progress.

This opportune arrival changed the whole face of affairs, as if by magic. An instant before, and the republicans had been the assailants, and the Vendéans were many of them in full retreat down the streets which led from the scene of action, but now, when they saw their General's division sweeping past them, they took heart, and returned to the contest, where their heroic young leaders were vainly endeavouring to make head against the enemy. Again rose the triumphant battle-cry of the royalists as the reinforcement hewed its way into the very thick of the republicans. Man to man was the struggle ; but there was no longer a chance of escape for Quetinau or his troops, for the wary D'Elbée, on his arrival, had taken the precaution of stationing a body of Vendéans across each neighbouring street, so as to cut off the enemy's retreat. Nevertheless, the republican commander continued his efforts with unflagging zeal, endeavouring to infuse into his men the hope which he had ceased to entertain himself; but finding that all was useless, that many of his soldiers were flinging down their arms in sullen,

abject despair, and that the space wherein they fought was so fully occupied that there was no room to practise any of those skilful manœuvres which have so often changed defeat into victory—finding this, and aware also that every approach to the town was in possession of the royalists, the disheartened Quetinau gave orders to sound a parley; and advancing bare-headed to D'Elbée, to whom he had just previously dispatched an aid-de-camp with an offer of surrender, delivered up to him his sword, stained and dripping with blood.

In a few minutes the sounds of strife were hushed; the republicans laid down their arms, which furnished their conquerors with a welcome and abundant supply; and detachments of both parties, by order of their respective leaders, were soon busily engaged in carrying away the heaps of dead and wounded who thickly strewed the ground. While they were thus occupied, Cathelineau and Stofflet came up, with the few that remained of their luckless division after the explosion of the mine, and the desperate opposition they had met with in forcing an entrance into the town. Eagerly the chiefs congratulated each other on their success; the Marquis, in particular, could scarcely restrain his transports, as he listened to the praises of his son, to whose valour

and perseverance it was owing, said the generous De Lescure, that the passage of the bridge was forced.

“Did I not say,” observed Henri, “that within three hours Thouars should be in our possession?”

“Yet the victory has not been gained without a dreadful loss,” replied Cathelineau; “and I have to mourn the deaths of nearly four hundred as brave men as ever followed their leader into action.”

“Well—well, cheer up, my friend,” said the Marquis, “they could not have perished in a nobler cause; and let that be a consolation to the survivors.”

“See!” exclaimed Alphonse, his eyes sparkling with animation, “they have hauled down the tri-color, and are now hoisting the white flag on the church-tower!” and as he spoke, the banner of the Bourbons was displayed to the wind, which bore its folds to their full length, while cheer after cheer rose from the victorious Vendéans, as they gazed upwards at the welcome spectacle.

When order was in some measure restored, D’Elbée addressed his soldiers in a few emphatic words of encouragement, and then advancing courteously towards General Quétinau, who had

hitherto stood sullenly aloof amid a group of his officers, he offered them one and all their parole, which was accepted with a stiff and formal expression of thanks.

The royalist commander-in-chief next returned to consult with his colleagues as to what was best to be done with the rest of the prisoners. They were so numerous, that to guard them was impossible; and their parole, not to serve against the Vendéans, or any of the coalesced powers, would have been clearly of no avail.

In this dilemma, Stofflet, who had been leaning on his bloody sword, sternly eyeing the republicans, proposed, with that reckless brutality which characterized all his actions, to put every man of them to death.

“They would have done so to us,” he added, “if they had been the conquerors; and why should we hesitate? Remember the massacre at Bressuire, and the arrests and imprisonments of innocent persons that are hourly taking place at Nantes! Think of the wanton persecution of our curés; and above all,”—addressing himself to Cathelineau—“of the hundreds of our brave followers who within the hour have fallen victims to the murderous tactics of the enemy! Seigneurs, my vote is death!

A burst of indignation rose among the chiefs—more especially the younger ones—at these dreadful words, while the prisoners evinced an evident feeling of astonishment and uneasiness, and thronged closer together, apparently with the intention of defending each other to the last, and selling their lives as dearly as possible.

But before any one had time to express his opinion on the subject, Alphonse had darted forward, and looking at Stofflet, exclaimed, with generous emotion :

“ I am surprized and shocked, Monsieur, at your proposition. Have you no respect for the usages of war, and the claims of humanity ? ”

“ The republicans showed none at Bressuire,” was Stofflet’s dogged answer.

“ But that is no reason why we should follow their example at Thouars. We are not assassins, but Frenchmen ; and, great God ! whom is it proposed to massacre ? Not a foreign foe, but our own countrymen ; and this, not in the heat and frenzy of battle, but deliberately in cold blood, when the conflict is at an end, and the vanquished have laid down their arms ! Never while I live and wear a sword, shall this be ! ”

The feeling and energy with which the young man spoke, excited a corresponding emotion in

the hearts of all who heard him. The Vendéans, satisfied with their victory, and not having yet felt the whole crushing weight of republican vengeance, were in no mood to sully their laurels by any unnecessary acts of cruelty, and expressed their ready acquiescence in Alphonse's sentiments by a low murmur of approbation; while Quetinau, stepping forth from the group of officers by whom he was surrounded, thanked him with grave and courteous dignity, in the name of France and humanity, for his opposition to Stofflet's project.

In this state of things, Stofflet, who saw that he had gone too far, and was not unwilling to efface the recollection of his brutality, said, with a sort of blunt, practical humour, that was common to him :

“ Since we deem it inexpedient effectually to secure ourselves against our prisoners' future hostility, why not cut off their hair? Crop them close, and then let them go; and we shall have a sure mark by which we may recognize them, in the event of their being again taken in arms against us.”

This whimsical notion suited well with the rough, excitable humour of the moment. The peasants caught at it eagerly, and the Marquis de Chatillon, who was by no means troubled with

refined and delicate sensibilities, seconded it with a loud and hearty laugh, greatly to the vexation of his son and De Lescure, who regarded the proposition as little better than a wanton affront to the unfortunate.

Their remonstrances, however, were unheeded, and experienced hands being sought out and pressed into the service, the republican soldiers were cropped one by one in the public square like a flock of sheep, their officers having previously withdrawn with D'Elbée, Alphonse, De Lescure, and Henri, who were considerably anxious to spare them the spectacle of their followers' humiliation.

The Vendean peasants, together with the Marquis and Stofflet, who remained among them till the last man was cropped, enjoyed the joke exceedingly, particularly when any of the soldiers turned restive, and refused to part with his hair. One gaunt, irritable, red-faced corporal occasioned them infinite diversion, for he happened to be particularly sensitive on the score of his locks, which being of a rusty black, like the wing of a moulting raven, and as stiff and tangled as a furze-bush, he very naturally regarded with pride and affection. Accordingly, when forced into a chair which had been procured for the operation, he kicked, scratched, pinched, and launched a

thousand ferocious “sacrés !” and “diabes !” at the head of the perplexed barber ; and having contrived to get the fore-finger of a peasant, who was holding him down, between his teeth, he bit it clean to the bone, while the poor fellow kept howling and capering about as if he were mad, and had the greatest possible difficulty in releasing his aggrieved digit. As a punishment for this refractory behaviour, the barber was commanded by Stofflet to substitute the razor for the scissors ; and in an incredibly short space of time, the luckless corporal, despite his desperate opposition, was shaved as bald as a turnip, and then escorted, with the rest of his fellow-prisoners to one of the gates of the town, where they were dismissed by the peasants with shouts of laughter and derision.

CHAPTER IX.

GOOD news travels quickly, and in less time than could be imagined, it had become generally known throughout the neighbourhood that the royalists had captured Thouars. Infinite was the joy of the peasantry at these tidings, which confirmed the wavering, lent courage to the timid, and energy to the slothful ; and they flocked by hundreds into the town, eager to offer their services to the triumphant Seigneurs. This reinforcement was very welcome to the chiefs, for they had sustained serious losses during the recent conflict, and many of the survivors had already, according to their usual custom, expressed a wish to return to their families, who, they said, would be filled with solicitude till personally assured of their safety. The new volunteers, therefore, were immediately enrolled among

the army, arms were distributed to them, and they were told to hold themselves in readiness to march in a few days to the attack of Parthenay.

The public functionaries of Thouars, meantime, were no sooner acquainted with the surrender of Quetinau, than they resolved, after a hasty, anxious consultation, to go up in a body to the conquerors, and, making a virtue of necessity, tender them their congratulations, in the hope that they might thereby disarm their hostility, and induce them to use their triumph with moderation.

They found General d'Elbée, the Marquis de Chatillon, and several other chiefs, seated with Quetinau and one or two of his staff, in the very house which the republican commander had selected as his quarters, and which he had quitted but a few hours before, on the first tidings of the approach of the besiegers.

The presence of Quetinau, on which they had not calculated, greatly disconcerted the deputation, for they could not but be aware that he was well acquainted with their real sentiments, and they thought it far from unlikely, that when informed of the cause of their visit, he might, as a conscientious republican, openly express his contempt of their lukewarmness, if not absolute double-dealing, and so make matters worse.

And just as they had anticipated, so it came to pass ; for scarcely had the principal civic functionary, M. Beaupreau—a sly, fat, easy, timid little man—after one or two minutes' hesitation and embarrassment, during which he cast more than one significant glance at Quetinau, as if beseeching him to hold his tongue, at length mustered up courage and assurance enough to express the satisfaction of himself and his official colleagues at the turn which affairs had taken, than the General bluntly burst out with :

“The shuffling poltroons ! Would you believe it, gentlemen,” addressing the assembled chiefs, “the very language which these fellows now hold to you, they held to me not two hours after I entered Thouars ? Place no faith in their assertions, for they are republicans at heart, whatever, from interested motives, they may allege to the contrary.”

“General Quetinau,” replied M. Beaupreau, stammering at every word, and looking as silly and perplexed as a calf in a butcher's cart, “believe me, you are in error ; I say it with infinite respect, but you are altogether in error. We are neither republicans nor royalists, but simply friends to peace and good order, and warmly interested in the welfare of our fellow-citizens.”

“And that welfare,” replied Quetinau, casting a glance of withering contempt at the deputation, “is only to be promoted, you think, by crying ‘Long life to the conqueror!’ no matter what principles he upholds, or the means by which he carries them into effect.”

“It is our bounden duty, as constituted guardians of this town,” rejoined Beaupreau, evading a direct answer, “to abstain from all interference with matters that nowise concern—that is, I mean, to keep a watchful eye on the interests of our fellow-townsmen, and take every precaution to ensure their personal safety. Can you blame us for discharging our duty?”

“Your duty!” repeated Quetinau, disdainfully. “Is it the duty of a French citizen to volunteer his services to the republic, and then on the very first reverse that may befall her arms, to transfer his allegiance to her enemies?”

“You mistake our position, General,” exclaimed another member of the deputation, with an air of humility: “we are not soldiers, but quiet, inoffensive citizens, clothed with authority for no other purpose, as it seems to us, than to maintain peace and order in Thouars.”

“In other words,” said Quetinau, “you feel it your duty to pursue a neutral course of conduct.”

“ Why, not exactly neutral,” rejoined Beaupreau, feeling the full awkwardness of his position ; “ but—but—in short, such a line of conduct as, in our humble judgment, may best tend to the interests of those of whom the law has appointed us the guardians.”

“ You hear them, gentlemen,” exclaimed Quetinau, turning to the chiefs who were exceedingly diverted with the crest-fallen demeanour of the deputation ; “ you hear these time-serving, equivocating cowards, who would fain stand well with two antagonist parties, yet compromise themselves with neither. In God’s name, treat them as you think such poltroons deserve to be treated ; visit them with fine, imprisonment—even death, if you please ; I shall not interfere in their behalf, for from this moment the republic, through me, disowns them ; and mark me, renegades, you, who have meanly abandoned the noblest cause in which France ever drew the sword—mark me, I say, and take heed to the warning I now give you—should our arms ever again triumph in Thouars, on you shall fall the heaviest vengeance of the republic !”

The dismay of the deputation at these words was inexpressibly ludicrous. They looked first at Quetinau, then at the chiefs, then at each other, shifting uneasily about, and endeavouring with all

their might to assume an air of astonishment and injured innocence.

This forlorn exhibition continued for some minutes ; at length D'Elbée good-naturedly desirous to put an end to the perplexity of men to whom he entertained no ill-will, though at heart he and his brother chiefs cordially despised them, said : " I thank you for your congratulations, gentlemen, of the sincerity of which I am well assured, for I read it in your countenances, which exhibit manifest tokens," he added, laughing, " of the frank, cordial, and eager spirit in which you have approached us, and of your enthusiasm in the glorious cause we espouse. However, notwithstanding your professed loyalty—which, far be it from me to call in question—there are certain terms that I shall propose, which as discreet civic functionaries, anxious, as you justly observe, for the welfare of those intrusted to your guardianship, you will of course readily accede to."

" Name them," said Beaupreau, making a long face as if he were about to swallow a dose of physic, for he feared that a heavy fine was one of the General's propositions.

" In the first place," observed D'Elbée " you must undertake to provide suitable quarters for our men, and furnish them, at your own cost, with

all such necessities as may be required during their stay at Thouars."

"We will do so most readily," replied Beaupreau.

"Secondly, you must release all the prisoners that have been taken by the republicans."

"Such an act of humanity," exclaimed Beaupreau, with a sudden and surprizing burst of benevolence, "is one most consonant to our feelings as Frenchmen and as Christians ; and we agree to it with an alacrity which I, for one, have some difficulty in expressing.

"Amiable philanthropist !" muttered Henri, with a sneer.

"The canting hypocrite !" said Quetinau to the Marquis, who perfectly reciprocated his sentiments.

"Thirdly, you must surrender all such curés as have taken the oath to the constitution, and are now residing among you, under the protection of the tricolor."

This last proposition greatly added to the perplexity of the deputation, who could not but feel that they had given direct encouragement to the constitutional priests, and were therefore bound in honour to stand up for them. M. Beaupreau, accordingly, was commencing a vague, wordy speech, about the honour of the civic functionaries,

&c., when D'Elbée abruptly cut him short with: "I have neither time nor inclination to listen to fine speeches; let your answer, therefore, be simply—Yes or No."

"Humph! why, really—oh, Yes, certainly," added Beaupreau, as he perceived a frown of displeasure gathering on the brows of the royalist General.

"Then, gentlemen," said D'Elbée, "as all is now satisfactorily arranged between us, we will not insist on your further attendance. Your time, no doubt, is precious—so is ours. M. Alphonse de Chatillon, you will be pleased to accompany M. Beaupreau to the prison, and see that he issues his orders to the jailer for the instant—mark me, for the instant release of all the captives. We will talk about the curés bye and bye. Gentlemen, you may retire," and he bowed formally to the members of the deputation, who quitted the apartment with infinitely more expedition than they had entered it.

When they had retired, D'Elbée courteously addressing Quetinau, said: "I am not surprized, General, at your disgust at the duplicity of these men, and should be greatly pleased if it were to have the effect of weaning you from a cause which—were other proofs needed—cannot but be a bad

one, since it has received the sanction of such dastards."

"I thank you for your courtesy," said Quetinau, "but as I espoused republicanism from conviction, I am little likely to fall away in my allegiance to it through the weakness of those who adopted it from intent or fear."

"I would to God you could be prevailed on to join us!" observed De Lescure, on whom Quetinau's manly, soldier-like bravery had made a most favourable impression. "Depend on it, General, the Jacobins of Paris will never forgive you the loss of Thouars, though you did all that a brave and skilful commander could do to avert the shame of defeat."

"I have said already that I will never betray my duty," was Quetinau's dry rejoinder.

The Marquis de Chatillon listened, but said nothing. He respected the conscientious notions of the General, but at the same time his prejudices against republicans were so strong that he could not find it in his heart to compliment him. He therefore contented himself with looking stern and dignified, and exchanging every now and then a word with Henri de Larochejaquelein.

During this brief dialogue, Alphonse, having arranged his disordered dress, and washed the stains

of blood from his hands and face, hastened away with Beaupreau in the direction of the prison. On his road thither he passed the spot where the mine had exploded, and shuddered involuntarily at the spectacle of wholesale destruction it presented. The earth was torn and rent for yards round; masses of blackened bricks were strewed in every direction, mixed with fragments of human limbs, and entire bodies so hideously disfigured, that recognition was no longer possible.

“Such are among the inevitable consequences of civil war!” muttered the young soldier, in a low tone, as he turned away sick at heart from the ghastly sight. “Gracious God! what have not those wretches to answer for who have forced the upholders of monarchy to resort to so dreadful an alternative!”

“And thus thinking,” exclaimed his companion, who had overheard his remarks, “can you wonder that the peaceable authorities of this town are anxious to prevent further bloodshed, by giving in their adhesion to the royalists, when further resistance would be unavailing? Believe me Monsieur, General Quetinau does us cruel injustice, when he attributes that to our duplicity which has been suggested only by our disinterested regard for the welfare of our fellow-townsmen.”

“I am not your judge, Monsieur,” replied Alphonse, coldly, for he, too, had been disgusted with the demeanour of the deputation; “so you may spare yourself the trouble of justification. Have we much further to go?”

“No,” was the reply of the disconcerted Beaupreau; “that large building before us is the prison. And I trust you will find on inquiry that the unhappy inmates have been treated with lenity, and even kindness. The civic functionaries of Thouars, Monsieur—though I, an unworthy member of their body, say so—have always been as remarkable for their humanity as their patriotism.”

With this flourish of speech, which he delivered with exceeding unction, Beaupreau crossed the street, and halting at the prison-gate, gave a lusty pull at the bell. In less than a minute the bolts and bars were withdrawn, the door unlocked, and the jailer stood before the visitors.

“Sad times—sad times, citizen Beaupreau!” exclaimed the jailer; “to think that the soldiers of the republic should have been beaten by a mob of ragged, scare-crow peasants who have no more notion of—”

“Hold your tongue, Sir,” said the magistrate, with an air of authority. “What have you to do with republicans or royalists? Confine yourself

to your own duties, and don't meddle with what doesn't concern you."

"Come, come, Monsieur," replied the jailer, with a dogged air of defiance, "this language won't do now. Remember, I am a free and independent French citizen, under the protection of the Republic; and as such, I will take an affront from no man, no matter what be his station. Confine myself to my own duties, indeed! Well, and isn't it my duty to wish well to the republican arms, which protect me and mine from the tyranny of the aristocrats? Now, you needn't knit your brows and look so fierce, for I promise you, you shall get no civiller words from me than you gave."

"I did not mean to hurt your feelings," replied the prudent magistrate, who felt the full force of the man's hint about his independence as a French citizen.

"Why, then, as that's the case, there's no more to be said," returned the appeased jailer. "And now, what's the meaning of this visit? You've not come to order the release of the prisoners, I hope?"

"Indeed, but I have," said Beaupreau: "the royalists, as you know, are in possession of the town, and have just issued strict orders for the

liberation of every man, woman, and child, who may have been captured by the republicans."

"For their immediate liberation," observed Alphonse, laying an emphasis on the word immediate.

"Even so," rejoined the magistrate.

"And you will please to remember also," added the young man, "that I am directed not to quit the prison, till I have personally witnessed the release of every single royalist."

"And so these villainous aristocrats are again to be turned loose like wolves among a flock of sheep, to see which can best plot against the Republic," exclaimed the indignant jailer. "'Tis a scandalous business, and nought but mischief can come of it. Here, citizen—here are the keys," taking an enormous bunch which hung suspended at his waist, and thrusting it into the magistrate's hands, "here are the keys, I say; and now, if you want to set free the aristocrats, you may do it yourself, and the devil give you joy of your task! What between the orders of General Quetinau, to treat them kindly, and those of the royalists to let them loose, things have come to a pretty pass here at Thouars. However, I wash my hands of the business altogether." And with these words the surly official moved, grumbling, away across the yard.

As Alphonse and the magistrate proceeded towards the interior of the prison, they met the under-jailer, and the former insisted on his accompanying them to the different cells tenanted by the royalists. The first they opened was a long narrow apartment lighted by two slips of grated windows close to the ceiling, and containing no more furniture than just a few rude benches and a wooden table, while the floor was covered with straw and rushes, intended to do duty as beds. Here were confined some fifty or sixty peasants, who expressed unbounded joy at their liberation, and scarcely stopping to thank their deliverers, rushed forth into the streets like so many school-boys when the day's discipline is at an end. In various other cells about thirty more prisoners were found, some of whom were small tradesmen from Bressuire, who, during the occupation of that town by the republicans, had been heard to express themselves in favour of the royalists, and had, in consequence, been arrested, and on Quetinau's retreat, been compelled to accompany him to Thouars.

After threading their way through numerous dark, dirty, stifling passages, which forcibly reminded Alphonse of the Bicêtre in Paris, the visitors came to a part of the prison which was

much better ventilated, and wore a neater and more cheerful aspect.

“Here, I suppose,” said Alphonse, looking about him, “the jailer and his household reside.”

“No,” replied the turnkey; “this part of the building is set apart for the accommodation of those whom we are ordered to treat with more than common consideration; and except that they cannot go in or out just whenever they please, they have no cause for complaint, for they eat and drink of the best, and their apartments are as comfortable as any reasonable person could desire.”

“And have you any prisoners here just now?” inquired Alphonse.

“Only two—a father and daughter, I believe. Nice, quiet, civil folks in their way, notwithstanding they’re royalists; and they’re the only two now left in the prison;” and stopping opposite a door which, though massive, and secured by strong fastenings, differed in no other respect from that of a private citizen’s dwelling, the turnkey withdrew the bolts, and throwing the door wide open, preceded his companions into a small, plainly-furnished sitting-room, which was connected with two chambers beyond it; and with more courtesy than he had yet shown, he announced to the

inmates that they were no longer captives, but were free to depart whenever and wherever they pleased.

At this unexpected announcement, an exclamation of delight burst from the lips of the younger prisoner, a female, who, starting up from her seat, threw herself into the arms of her fellow-captive, and murmured in a voice half-choked with emotion :

“ My dear, dear father, Heaven has heard our prayers ; and we shall yet be happy.”

Something there was in the tones, agitated as they were, of the young lady's voice, that sent a thrill to Alphonse's heart ; and when she again raised her head, and turned her eyes smiling through tears, towards the door, her glance fell full on the young chief, who at that moment was standing a few paces in advance of his companions, regarding her with looks of the deepest interest. The recognition was mutual.

“ Annette !”

“ Alphonse !”

“ Annette, dearest Annette,” repeated Alphonse, his countenance radiant with joy, as he seized both her hands, and pressed them fervently to his lips, “ what a surprize is this ! Who could have imagined when we last parted, that our next meeting

would be within the walls of a prison? My kind friend—my more than friend, my father,” he added, releasing Annette, and stepping up to Delille, who had stood perfectly motionless, apparently from excess of emotion, “need I say how delighted I am to be the means of releasing you from this hateful captivity? Come, let us hasten to quit a spot which—”

“A moment—spare me a moment,” said M. Delille, “the surprize of this meeting has—” and unable to utter a word more, and not liking to expose his weakness, he pressed his deliverer by the hand, and then hurried into an adjoining apartment, and closed the door behind him.

“My poor father’s spirits have failed him sadly within the last few days,” said Annette, “but, thank God, his trials are now over; and I hope and trust that, as his peace of mind returns, health and strength will return with it.”

Beaupreau, who had been a silent but not uninterested spectator of this affecting scene, and who, though a timid, shuffling partizan, was possessed of a kindly nature, and was, moreover, desirous, from prudential motives, to win the esteem of one of the royalist leaders, here stepped forward, and after ordering the turnkey to retire, offered Alphonse his own house for the accommo-

dation of his friends as long as it might suit them to reside in Thouars, adding that his wife would be proud to show every attention to the young lady and her father, who, if he apprehended rightly, were unprovided with a fitting residence, and might have some difficulty in finding one, owing to the confused and crowded state of the town.

Alphonse looked at Annette to see what she thought of this timely and courteous offer, and reading in the pleased expression of her countenance that she was well satisfied to accept it, said :

“ I thank you, Monsieur Beaupreau, for your kindly and considerate proposal, and feel assured that my friends cannot do better than embrace it.”

Annette also thanked the worthy magistrate with one of her sweetest smiles ; and then, with a lighter heart than she had known for many a day, tripped nimbly into an inner room fronting that which her father had entered, in order to make what few preparations might be necessary for her departure.

“ Monsieur Beaupreau,” said Alphonse, when they were left alone together, “ I feel that I owe you an apology for the uncourteous manner in

which I demeaned myself to you on our road hither; but my feelings were chafed by the exciting events of the morning, and—in short, I did injustice to your character, whose sterling worth I now feel I cannot appreciate too highly. In offering the shelter of your roof to the dearest friends I have on earth, you have laid me under the deepest obligations to you; and should it ever be in my power to return your kindness, trust me, Alphonse de Chatillon will not prove himself ungrateful.”

“You overrate my services, Monsieur de Chatillon,” replied the gratified magistrate, “I have but acted as I hope every Frenchman would act were he placed in my situation. Besides, to tell you the truth, I consider myself the obliged party, for the young lady who has just quitted us, reminds me so strongly—” and here his voice faltered—“of my own poor child, Theresa, who died about two years since, that from the first moment I beheld her—”

Annette here re-entered the apartment in a plain but elegant walking-dress which set off her slender and gracefully rounded figure to the greatest advantage, and going up to the magistrate, she again thanked him for his courtesy; but in a blunt good-natured tone he interrupted her with, “Non-

sense, my dear young lady, you owe me no thanks—none at all, for as I told M. de Chatillon just now, I look on myself as the obliged party. But enough of this, here comes your father; and as I presume he will offer no objection to our scheme, we had better get out without loss of time.”

As they quitted the prison, Alphonse acquainted Delille with the arrangement to which they had come, and at which he expressed great pleasure; and then, in reply to the young man's eager inquiries respecting the circumstances that had led to his imprisonment at Thouars, when he had understood that he was on his way to the sea-coast, in order to embark for England; Delille briefly informed Alphonse of the various events that had befallen him from the period of his secret flight from Nantes to the Isle of Noirmoutier, where he had learned that an English merchant-ship was in waiting to convey him and several more of his fellow-citizens to Jersey, whence they might procure a passage to England. He related how he had quitted Nantes at day-break, accompanied by his daughter, both disguised as peasants; how, on reaching St. Phillibert, they had fallen in with a small republican detachment on its way to join General Quetinau; and how, having been recog-

nized by one of the soldiers, an inhabitant of the city, they had been arrested as royalist fugitives, plundered of what money they had about them, and carried across the country to Bressuire, a long and harassing journey, where, on their arrival, half-dead with fatigue and anxiety, they had been delivered up to the General as offenders of the deepest die, caught in the heinous act of attempting to escape from the imprisonment to which they would infallibly have been subjected had they remained a day longer at Nantes.

“And what treatment did you receive at the hands of Quetinau?” inquired Alphonse, anxiously.

“We had no reason to be dissatisfied,” replied Delille, “for the General received us with urbanity—indeed, I might say, kindness; but he frankly stated that he could not permit us to resume our journey to the coast, for he had received the strictest orders to apprehend all royalist fugitives. He added, however, that though he must consider us as his prisoners, he would take care that we should receive every attention during our confinement; and I must say that he fulfilled his promise to the letter, for he not only gave express directions to the jailer on the subject, but insisted on the leader of the republican detachment return-

ing the money of which he had plundered us, by which means we were enabled to lay aside our disguise, no longer needful, and furnish ourselves with such personal conveniences as we might require. On the General's retreat to this town, we were compelled to accompany him; but when transferred to the prison from which you have just liberated us, we found that our generous captor had again actively interfered in our behalf, so that our only grief has been the loss of personal liberty, and the gloom and uncertainty in which our future prospects seemed till now to be shrouded."

"I am delighted beyond measure," said Alphonse, when Delile had concluded his narrative, "to find that I have not been deceived in Quetinau. I knew him to be a brave man, and was strongly impressed with the notion that he was also a humane one. He is now with us on his parole; but after what you have told me, I shall make every effort to procure his full and immediate liberation."

"Pray do so," exclaimed Annette, warmly, "he is every way deserving of your esteem; for had it not been for his kind and considerate interference, your old friends would have been subjected to the most rigorous treatment. We had a foretaste of

this on our road from St. Phillibert to Bressuire ; but the instant the General was apprized of our capture, and the circumstances under which it took place, he did everything in his power to mitigate our hard lot."

During this dialogue, Beaupreau had kept a few paces in advance of the party, deeming it probable that they might not like a stranger to overhear their conversation ; and the same feeling of delicacy induced him to take them by a circuitous route to his house, so that Annette might be spared the ghastly spectacle which would have awaited her, had she passed by the open space near the church, which was the shortest way to his dwelling. He now halted, till they came up with him, before a small iron gate which opened into the street, and lifting the latch, led the way across a paved yard into a roomy, old-fashioned house, fitted up in the cumbrous style of Louis XV.'s days, where he introduced them to his wife, an elderly lady of homely and unassuming aspect, who received them with ready courtesy ; and when informed by her husband of the singular circumstances under which Alphonse and the Delilles had been brought together, she expressed her gratification that he had been the fortunate medium of such a reunion.

“We need something to cheer us,” she added, “for we have been in a continual state of anxiety for these few days past; and I leave you to imagine, Monsieur,” addressing Alphonse, “what must have been our feelings when we were roused at day-break this morning by the thunder of cannon, and learned soon afterwards that the town was in possession of the royalists. My poor husband anticipating the worst, said to me—”

“Never mind what I said, my dear,” hastily rejoined Beaupreau; “everything is satisfactorily arranged now, and we need entertain no further apprehensions for the safety of our fellow-townsmen.”

“Not a hair of their head shall be harmed,” exclaimed Alphonse, “to this I distinctly pledge myself; and for you, Monsieur Beaupreau,” he continued, with an arch smile, “though your principles, I fear, are not such as I am altogether prepared to approve, I entreat you to regard me, not in the light of a successful opponent, but of a steady friend, who forgets the republican in his respect for the private worth of the man.”

“My husband is no more a republican than I am, though he has been pleased to fancy himself one for the last few months,” observed the old lady.

There was some truth in this remark, for Beaupreau was one of those timid, good-natured, undecided characters who, having no fixed political principles of their own, are ductile as wax to receive impressions from others ; who float smoothly along the current of popular opinion without greatly troubling their heads to consider whether it be taking a wrong or a right direction ; and who are republicans or royalists just according as the creed of one party or the other may happen to predominate in the social circle in which they move.

In reply to his wife's observation, which he felt was a home-thrust, Beaupreau was about commencing a prolix defence of his consistency, when Alphonse laughingly cut him short by observing :

“ My good friend, we will discuss these matters some other time ; but for the present I must leave you, for I have public business on hand which may not be neglected.”

“ But surely you will return to dine with us ?” said Beaupreau.

“ And we are to consider you as our guest, I hope, during your stay at Thouars,” added his wife.

“ I would gladly become your guest,” returned Alphonse, “ but I have already secured quarters in the house where my father and his colleagues have

taken up their abode ; and there are pressing public reasons why I should not be absent from their councils.”

“ At any rate,” observed Annette, with a look of disappointment which she vainly strove to disguise, “ we may hope that you will devote to my father and myself such time as you can spare from your duties.”

“ Certainly,” replied Alphonse ; “ and I will most assuredly return here this evening, when we will have a little confidential chit-chat, and talk of our plans for the future.”

CHAPTER X.

IMMEDIATELY on leaving Beaupreau's house, Alphonse directed his steps towards the headquarters of the Vendean chiefs, whom he found busily engaged in discussing their future operations. The Marquis de Chatillon, together with Henri and Stofflet, were in favour of an instant advance on Parthenay, but D'Elbée, always cautious, thought it better that they should remain at Thouars for a week or two, observing that every day would add to their numbers and the efficiency of their soldiers, and of course to their chances of success.

“ You are wrong, General—decidedly wrong in your views,” said the Marquis, bluntly ; “ delay, so far from benefitting our cause, can only injure it, by creating an impression in the Bocage that we

are either not strong enough, or not bold enough to follow up our success. What but energy and promptitude of action have gained us possession of this town? Had we halted at Bressuire, we should not have stood on our present vantage-ground; and if we make any long halt here we shall give the republicans time to concentrate their forces. No delay! It is injurious in most cases—ruinous in ours. How say you, Henri?”

“I am but a poor hand either at giving or taking advice,” observed Larochejaquelein, “and shall, therefore, merely state that that council will be most to my taste, whose effect will be to bring us quickest in presence of the enemy.”

“With deference to the Marquis’s better judgment,” said De Lescure, “I would suggest that a delay of three or four days at Thouars would at least be attended with this good effect—namely, that it would enable us to improve the discipline of our troops, and give us an opportunity of learning something respecting the strength of the defences at Parthenay, and the number of its garrison.”

“And, pray, what republican will be obliging enough to furnish us with this useful information?” asked the Marquis, testily: “will Quétinau or his staff, think you? or will some

deserter from Parthenay arrive just in the nick of time to tell us all we want to know?"

"We may wait long enough, and be laughed at for our pains, as imbeciles," exclaimed Stofflet, sneeringly, "if we wait till we obtain full particulars respecting the state of the garrison in that town."

There was something in the tone in which this remark was made, that grated unpleasantly on the ears of De Lescure, who replied, with some *hauteur*: "M. Stofflet's valour in action is more to be commended than his prudence in council."

"You presume on your rank, Seigneur," said Stofflet, "to cast slight on the humble game-keeper; but humble as I am, not the proudest and noblest of you all—"

"Gently—gently, Stofflet," interposed D'Elbée. "My young friend, though he spoke in haste, had no intention of wounding the feelings of a brave and zealous soldier like yourself."

"Nothing was further from my intention," said De Lescure; "for, in common with us all, I hold the courage and zeal of Stofflet in the highest admiration, though, at the same time, I could have wished that his manner had been a little more courteous, when he alluded to my suggestion respecting—"

“I was not aware that I had said anything offensive, Monseigneur,” observed Stofflet; “for, as you know, I am but a rude untaught soldier, ignorant of the usages of aristocratic life, and accustomed to speak out frankly and boldly.”

“Come—come, we have had enough of this—now to the point,” interrupted the elder De Chatillon, with a gesture of impatience. “You agree with me, I presume, Stofflet, that we should march on with the least possible delay.”

“Certainly,” replied the sturdy peasant-leader; “and for this reason, that if we make any delay here, our motives will be sure to be misinterpreted both by our friends and enemies.”

“That is true,” observed Henri de Larochejaquelein, “so, forward to Parthenay, is my advice! Let not to-morrow’s sun see us still lingering in Thouars, wiling away time whose loss in our case is irreparable. For my own part, I shall never be contented till I find myself once again heading a charge against the cut-throats of the republic.”

“My brave boy!” exclaimed the delighted Marquis, “your sentiments do credit to your head and heart. Alphonse, I need hardly ask whether you agree in opinion with Henri.”

“I should not have the slightest hesitation in doing so,” replied Alphonse, modestly, “were I

assured that our force was sufficiently strong to attempt an enterprize of moment with any chance of success. But you are aware that we have sustained serious losses this morning, and, moreover, we must calculate on hundreds of our peasants quitting us, according to custom, to return home to their families—but here comes Cathelineau, who will be able to speak more explicitly on this point than I can.”

The gallant woolstapler was no sooner informed of the nature of the discussion in which his colleagues were engaged, then he at once firmly, but respectfully, gave his opinion in favour of a halt of a day or two, observing, in confirmation of Alphonse’s remark, that numbers of the peasants had already announced their intention of returning home to their families; and it would be a rash and injudicious step to leave Thouars until they had received the reinforcements which might be expected to arrive in the course of the morrow from the adjacent villages.

This decided the question, and it was resolved that a halt of forty-eight hours should be made at Thouars, during which time no means should be left untried to procure reinforcements; and at the expiration of this period the chiefs should set forth with all their disposable forces to the attack

of Parthenay. The council then broke up, and Alphonse, worn out with his recent exertions, flung himself back in his chair, and was soon buried in a deep, dreamless slumber, from which he did not wake till he received a summons to the dinner-table.

In the evening he repaired, according to promise, to Beaupreau's house; and on his way there he met General Quetinau, who was standing alone, watching a large and noisy party of peasants who were engaged in their favourite occupation of burning the tree of liberty in the market-place, "The fools!" muttered the indignant General, as Alphonse came up, "they little know the real nature of the cause which they have so much at heart, or the narrow, arbitrary principles of the men who uphold that cause!"

"I trust, General," said Alphonse, who had overheard this testy observation, "that you will not find us, on further acquaintance, quite so narrow or arbitrary in our views as you may imagine. At any rate, we have sufficient discernment and liberality to enable us to do justice to the character of General Quetinau, whom we all hold in such high esteem that it is a subject of no small regret to us that we cannot rank him among our allies."

The General bowed low to this compliment, but observed: "My sword must never be drawn but in the sacred cause of liberty."

"We, too," rejoined Alphonse, "draw the sword for liberty, only it is for rational liberty, not the ill-regulated licence of the *canaille*. But waiving these matters, on which I fear, we are never likely to agree, I have to offer you, General, my heart-felt acknowledgments for the kindness you have shown to two very old and dear friends of mine, who were imprisoned as suspected royalists at Bressuire, and since transferred hither by your orders."

"You allude, I imagine," replied Quetinau, "to a Monsieur Delille, and a young lady who, I understand, was his daughter. I remember that case perfectly, and thinking it somewhat of a hard one, I felt it incumbent on me to do what lay in my power to mitigate the severity of their lot. Indeed, had I been permitted to consult my own feelings I should at once have liberated them; but my orders with regard to the royalists were so imperative, that I could not venture to disobey them. Your friends, I trust, are once again at liberty."

"They are so!" exclaimed Alphonse; "and it was from their own lips that I heard of your

generous interposition in their behalf. And now, General Quetinau, allow me to request your particular attention to the proposition which I am about to make to you. At present, as you know, you are on your parole; but I think—indeed I am certain—that it is in my power to procure your full and instant release, provided you will agree to quit La Vendée forthwith, and not bear arms against the royalists for the space of one twelvemonth. There is nothing in these conditions to which a conscientious republican need object; and I offer them in testimony of the grateful sense I entertain of your kindness towards my friends, the Delilles.”

“I would gladly accede to your proposition,” replied Quetinau, “which is as liberal as it is considerate; but holding the strong fixed principles I do, I could never reconcile myself to the idea of voluntarily abandoning even for a day, much less a year, the righteous cause of the Republic.”

“You are not required to abandon the Republic,” observed Alphonse, “but merely to refrain, for a certain specified term, from taking an active part against the royalists.”

“I am perfectly aware,” said Quetinau, “that there is nothing in your proposal against which an

honest man need protest, still, I cannot bring myself to accept it, especially at the present crisis, when the Republic, besides being exposed to the fury of more than one fierce faction at home, is menaced with the inveterate hostility of the emigrant princes and their foreign allies. But though I decline your offer, believe me, citizen—Monsieur de Chatillon, I should say, for I see that the phrase ‘citizen’ is distasteful to you—believe me, I am not the less sensible of the kindness that prompted you to make it;” and with this, he bowed and quitted Alphonse, as if desirous to escape all further importunity on the subject.

“Well, after all I cannot but respect his scruples,” said the young chief. “What a pity he is not a royalist! He is just the sort of man one would wish to make a friend of—not unlike Servette in the high and austere tone of his principles, but with more energy and decision of character—and now for Annette, dear Annette!” and as he breathed the name of the loved companion of his childhood, he hurried on at his briskest pace, as though he felt every minute was wasted that was not spent in her society.

Delille, who had now fully recovered his spirits,

received him with his usual placid kindness, and Annette running eagerly up to him, said : “ Oh, Alphonse, I have just heard of the dreadful scenes of this morning, and shudder to think of the danger to which you recklessly exposed yourself. That frightful passage of the bridge of Vrine ! Our kind host was told by a neighbour, who happened to be an eye-witness of the scene, that it was a miracle you escaped death, for you advanced alone and unsupported—”

“ Bah, Annette ! you make too much of a trifle,” said Alphonse, carelessly.

“ Trifle !” repeated Annette, looking affectionately in his face, “ oh, do not speak so lightly ! Nothing is trifling in our eyes that concerns you ; you know my father regards you as a son, and if any mischance were to befall you—”

“ Do not let us anticipate disasters, my love !” exclaimed Delille ; “ but let us rather thank God that our young friend has been preserved to us.”

“ I have escaped far greater perils than any I was exposed to this morning,” observed Alphonse, “ but of this hereafter—for the present, let us confine ourselves to matters of more immediate interest. And first, Delille, permit me to ask you if you have come to any settled determination respecting your future proceedings. I hope and trust that you have abandoned your idea of escaping to

England, for it is a scheme which is daily becoming more difficult of execution, and is only to be resorted to in the last extremity."

"So far from abandoning the idea of quitting France," rejoined Delille, "I am more firmly bent on it than ever; for, hazardous as I allow it to be, it is the only course left me to pursue. To return to Nantes would be madness—a wilful rushing into the lion's mouth; and how can I reconcile it to my sense of duty as a father, to allow my child to remain in a town which, though it be now occupied by the royalists, may, ere a week elapse, be retaken by the republicans?"

"You take too gloomy a view of things," replied the disappointed Alphonse. "Our cause is hourly gaining strength, the Seigneurs are with us, almost to a man, and even the Bretons are beginning to arm in our favour; while as regards this town of Thouars, trust me, we attach such importance to its possession, that its recapture is the last thing that need be apprehended."

"I am fully aware of the truth of what you say," rejoined Delille; "but remember, war is a game of hazard from which the boldest and most skilful do not always rise the winners."

"And if there be danger in remaining at Thouars," said Alphonse, "is there none—"

“ Danger !” interrupted Delille, “ can you doubt it, when you remember that I am on the list of the proscribed at Nantes, and, in the event of the republicans regaining possession of Thouars, run every risk of being recognized, as I was at St. Phillibert ?”

“ But is there no danger in journeying through a district infested by wandering bands of marauders ready for the commission of the worst crimes ?” said Alphonse. “ Surely you have had sufficient experience of the rashness of such an experiment !”

“ Ay, but that experience has taught me caution,” rejoined Delille, “ and thereby added to my chances of escape. You forget, too, that the troops of Charette are on the alert throughout the Marais, and that when we reach the isle of Noirmoutier we shall be in safety. But who can calculate on our safety from one hour to another while we remain in France ? It is dangerous to remain in Thouars, and I will grant that it is nearly equally so to travel in the Marais ; but of the two alternatives, the ast is the most to be preferred. Were I alone concerned, think not I would hesitate to remain here, and, old as I am, even to take part with you ; but I have a daughter, Alphonse, a young, timid, motherless child, and I cannot consent to expose her to the risks of civil war.”

Softened, but not convinced by this appeal, Alphonse, turning to Annette, said :

“ And do you side with this wild—for I cannot choose but call it wild—project of your father ?”

“ I would fain think that we were safe at Thouars under the protection of the royalists,” observed Annette, timidly ; “ but if my father is of a different opinion I must defer to his judgment.”

“ Since you are resolved, then, on this perilous journey, Delille,” said Alphonse, “ I will endeavour to provide you with an escort, though I fear it will be but a small one, for our force is greatly diminished by desertion, and we are only delaying our march on Parthenay in consequence of insufficient numbers. However, I will see my father and General d’Elbée on the subject.”

“ No, no,” rejoined Delille, “ mention our names to no one, not even to the Marquis ; for in maintaining the strictest privacy lies our only chance of success. Not a soul must know of our residence here, for to say nothing of other considerations, we are in no mood for society.”

“ Be it as you will,” said Alphonse. “ And when do you propose setting out ?”

“ To-morrow, or next day at farthest,” replied Delille.

“ So soon ! Would to God I could accompany you ; but, alas ! I dare not quit my post. What

would my brave companions in arms say were I to abandon them at the moment when the march to Parthenay was resolved on? My father, too—my noble-minded, but stern father, he would never forgive me.”

“And you,” exclaimed Annette, with a forced attempt at a smile, “you, as a true hero, would never forgive yourself. No, Alphonse, we will not be selfish or ungenerous enough to lure you from the path which honour, duty, and inclination alike call on you to follow. Leave us to our resources; we shall do well enough, I dare say—far better, perhaps, than if we had a regiment for our escort, and yourself for its commander. But, oh, Alphonse!”—this was said in a lower tone—“as you value my—my father’s affection, be chary of a life so dear to us both, and do not forget that it is a soldier’s duty to be prudent as well as brave.”

At this moment Beaupreau and his wife entered the room; and on being informed of the final determination to which Delille had come, gave it as their opinion that, situated as he was, placed on the proscription list, and well known throughout the district as one of the leading merchants of Nantes, he could not have adopted a wiser course. This decision added greatly to Alphonse’s chagrin; and when soon afterwards he took his leave for the

night, the tones of his voice were so changed, and the expression of his countenance so sad, that a stranger would have had some difficulty in believing that he was the same light-hearted individual who but three hours before had been full of hope and exultation. As he was strolling out next morning, filled with anxious thoughts respecting Annette, some one came up and tapped him lightly on the shoulder. He turned, and saw De Larochejaquelein at his elbow. "What ails you, Alphonse?" asked the buoyant young Seigneur; "are you ill, or are you in love? You walk with as downcast a tread and as leaden a pace as if you were walking at a funeral. Come, shake off this despondency which you have caught, I presume, from my pensive cousin De Lescure, and accompany me to the council, where I have tidings to communicate that will delight you;" and without waiting for a reply, he led or rather dragged Alphonse to the headquarters of the chiefs, who at the time were busy canvassing some important local information which they had received from a republican deserter recently arrived from Parthenay.

"Brave news!" exclaimed Henri, bounding into the room: "two bodies of peasantry, each five hundred strong, have just marched into the town; the late massacres at Bressuire and elsewhere have

incensed them in the highest degree, and they are clamorous for revenge against the enemy."

"And a third party," said Cathelineau, "consisting of about two hundred, may, I understand, be hourly expected from one of the neighbouring villages; so that the losses we have sustained by desertion and otherwise will be more than supplied."

"This is indeed good news!" exclaimed the elder De Chatillon, joyfully. "Now then, I presume, we are all of one mind, ready to resume the offensive with as little delay as possible."

"Yes," said D'Elbée, "I propose that we set out for Parthenay to-morrow soon after daybreak; for the garrison there, is, I am informed, greatly weakened by the departure of a regiment which has been hastily ordered to Fontenay, where the republicans have decided on making a stand."

"Then why not march at once to Fontenay?" inquired the impetuous Henri. "The greater the hazard, the greater the glory — the nobler the triumph!"

"What, and leave a garrison-town like Parthenay in our rear," said D'Elbée, with some surprise, "to cut off our communication with Bressuire and Thouars, in case of a reverse? That would indeed be bad generalship."

“If Monsieur de Larochejaquelein will consider their relative positions,” observed Cathelineau, in his usual quiet manner, “he will know that Parthenay lies but a short distance off the direct line of route to Fontenay.”

“I see I was hasty in my suggestion,” said Henri, endeavouring to hide his confusion beneath a careless laugh, “and I will never again presume to offer a word of advice in council. ’Tis for wiser heads than mine to suggest plans and give orders ; for me, I will henceforth be content with the passive obedience of the soldier.”

“You were speaking to me a short while since,” observed De Lescure, addressing the General, “about the expediency of our opening a communication with Charette. Had we not better do so at once ? for if the enemy’s force at Fontenay be as strong as is represented, we shall need all the aid that that brave commander can provide us with.”

“Undoubtedly it would be a judicious step to take,” replied D’Elbée, “and no time should be lost in taking it. Charette is now, I am credibly informed, stationed with the main body of his troops, on the coast, near the Isle of Noirmoutier, threatening Machecoult.”

“Near the Isle of Noirmoutier ?” asked Alphonse, eagerly.

“ Even so,” rejoined D’Elbée ; “ and I propose therefore, that a messenger be forthwith dispatched to his head-quarters, announcing our intended advance on Parthenay and Fontenay, and requesting his co-operation in the assault on the latter town.”

“ This is too important a matter to be intrusted to an ordinary messenger,” suggested the prudent De Lescure ; “ for should his dispatches be intercepted—”

“ Well thought on,” said D’Elbée ; “ the communication with Charette must be a *vivâ voce* one, and as such, it can only be conducted by one who is in our entire confidence. Cathelineau—Stofflet—you are both well acquainted with the Marais, what say you to undertaking the mission ?”

“ We are both of us too well known in the district to undertake it with propriety,” remarked Cathelineau : “ our presence there, at the present crisis, would be sure to get noised abroad ; and should it chance to reach the ears of any of the newly-raised conscripts in the neighbourhood, our arrest and the consequent failure of our mission would follow as a matter of certainty.”

“ Who so fit then to undertake such an enterprise as myself ?” exclaimed Alphonse, with sudden

ardour. "Henri, De Lescure, my father, and you, General, are all more or less known in the Marais, and generally throughout the Bocage; but as to me, the secluded habits of my life have made me almost a stranger in my native province, and I might travel from one extremity to the other without the slightest chance of being recognized."

"Alphonse says truly," observed the Marquis, "he was always so given up to study—the more's the pity—and so devoted to retirement, that I know not that I was ever able to prevail on him to accompany me, more than once or twice, to a boar-hunt."

"And can you, Alphonse," asked Henri, regarding him with a look of surprize, "can you thus readily consent to forego the glory that is to be acquired at Parthenay, and—long, I hope, ere you return—at Fontenay?"

"Henri," observed his cousin, gravely, "you seem to forget that a soldier's chief glory consists in sacrificing his own personal inclinations to the good of the cause which he espouses. As the greatest stranger of us all to the inhabitants of the districts through which he will have to pass, Alphonse does no more than his bounden duty in volunteering his services; but should his offer be a reluctant one, I myself will gladly go in his stead."

“No, no,” said Alphonse, whose thoughts at the moment were full of Annette and her father, and the unexpected prospect that presented itself of acting as their protector during their perilous journey to the coast, “you, De Lescure, can be less easily spared than myself; and were it not so, still, having made the offer, I should feel myself bound in honour to adhere to it. And now, General, when shall I set out? The sooner the better—say to-morrow.”

“Alphonse,” observed De Larochejaquelein, “I cannot understand your conduct; but a short while since you were all gloom and reserve, and when I asked you a question scarcely vouchsafed me an answer; now, your manner is as cheerful and ardent as if the expedition on which you were bound was the most acceptable and glorious that could be desired.”

“The consciousness that he is sacrificing inclination to a stern sense of duty, will always bring sunshine to the heart of a brave soldier,” exclaimed D’Elbée.

“And remember, Henri,” added Alphonse, gaily, “that I hope to return at the head of such a band of auxiliaries as shall place our victory at Fontenay beyond a doubt, and possibly even enable us to make a demonstration against Nantes,”

It was eventually decided that Alphonse should depart on the ensuing morning—a decision which was no sooner come to, than the delighted young chief betook himself to Beaupreau's house, in order to impart the welcome intelligence to the Delilles.

As he pursued his course along the streets, which were thronged with eager peasants, he could not but reflect with emotion on the strange events that had befallen him within the last two days. It was but this time yesterday—thus ran the train of his reflections—that Annette, whom I had imagined far away in England, and for ever lost to me, was unexpectedly restored ; and when in the fulness of my joy at her restoration I weaved a thousand bright visions for the future, a few resolute words from her father dispelled my day-dreams as soon as formed, and once again my hopes were clouded. And now, within the hour, a change, as abrupt as unforeseen, has revived all my hopes, and for a time at least I shall be the companion of Annette's wanderings, and hold daily unrestrained intercourse with her. The hour of our separation, however, must soon—but no matter—I will not anticipate gloom, but remember only that for some days to come, she whom I most love will be constantly by my side ; I shall see her smile—I shall listen to

the magical tones of her voice, and be no longer tortured with apprehensions for her safety.

In this cheerful frame of mind Alphonse presented himself at the house of the worthy magistrate; and great was the surprize and joy of the Delilles when they learned from his own lips that circumstances had just occurred which enabled him, consistently with his honour and duty, to offer himself as their companion on their journey. Madame Beaupreau was foremost to congratulate the young people on this unexpected change in their plans—for with the quick-wittedness of her sex she had already penetrated the secret of their mutual attachment—nor was her husband less ready to volunteer his services in assisting them to make such preparations as were needful. By his advice, Annette and her father once again had recourse to the peasant costume—a disguise which Alphonse also adopted; and when they had got together such few travelling conveniences as were requisite, and arranged, as well as they could, the plan of their route, the young chief, at a late hour, took leave of his friends for the night, and repaired to the headquarters of General d'Elbée, in order to receive from him his final instructions respecting the communication with Charette.

CHAPTER XI.

SOON after daybreak, the town of Thouars presented an extraordinary scene of bustle and animation. Early as was the hour, the majority of the citizens were up and stirring, roused by the sounds of horns, the discharge of guns, and the shouts of the exulting peasants who, in compliance with the previous orders of D'Elbée, were mustering for the intended move on Parthenay. When all was ready, the troops commenced their march, and Alphonse, accompanied his brother chiefs to the outskirts of the town, where he took leave of them ; and it will not, we trust, be impugning the sincerity and fervour of his affection for Annette, if we say, that he experienced a feeling, not exactly of shame, but of regret, as he turned back to Beaupreau's house, while the other Seigneurs were

advancing to a new triumph, from a participation in which he was debarred. But the feeling was as slight as it was evanescent, and wholly gave way beneath the first glance of the bright, black, loving eyes of Annette.

After a hasty breakfast, the travellers bade adieu to their hosts, who parted from them with great regret, and mounted the horses, which the prudent forethought of Beaupreau had secured for their accommodation. As a matter of necessary precaution, they were equipped in the humblest possible style: Delille and Alphonse wore the dress of the small farmers of the district, each with a brace of pistols, which he kept concealed in the broad red cotton scarf, which was wound about his waist; and Annette was clad in the garb of a young unmarried *paysanne*—that is to say, in a gown of striped red woollen stuff, with light sleeves, and ceasing some inches above the ankle, so as to permit the exhibition of a pair of white, ornamental linen stockings; a bright-coloured cotton 'kerchief spread over her shoulders, and its ends secured in front within her gown, so as to leave no portion of the neck or bosom uncovered; and a pair of those black *sabots* or shoes, on which, combining neatness with strength, the younger order of the Vendean peasantry have long been in

the habit of priding themselves. The only articles of dress in which she differed from the ordinary peasant costume, were in the substitution of a plain open bonnet for the usual *coiffure*, and in the use of a large dark woollen cloak which her sense of propriety had suggested, which she had carefully placed round her waist, and which completely enveloped all the lower part of her person, wrapping round her feet, and serving as a protection against the cold.

It was a cheerful, bracing autumn morning, the clouds were high in heaven, and the wind, which blew freshly against them, as the travellers rode on at a brisk pace, sent the blood spinning through their veins like quicksilver. Annette, in particular, was full of bounding, joyous life; and alluding to her peasant's dress, said laughingly to her father: "I think, papa, no one is likely to recognize us in this prepossessing costume."

"Do not be too sure," replied Delille, gravely; "what has happened once, may happen again. I do not say this in order to alarm you, but merely that you may be fully impressed with the necessity of maintaining the strictest caution and reserve, in case we should be stopped, and subjected to examination as at St. Phillibert."

"Oh, you need not doubt my prudence,"

rejoined Annette, "recent experience has taught me discretion ; and I will take care that my replies to any questions that may be put to me, shall closely correspond with my disguise. I am sure I shall make an excellent peasant—quite as exemplary a one as Marmontel's shepherdess of the Alps."

"And I will play shepherd to your shepherdess," observed Alphonse, giving into her mirthful humour ; "and it is hard if our rustic simplicity be not more than a match for the keen wits of the most distrustful republicans that we may chance to fall in with. But I must confess I do not apprehend any contingency of the sort, for the fellows must, by this time, have had such a taste of peasant valour, that they will be more likely to run away from us, than to court our hostility."

This was said, in order to keep up the confidence and cheerfulness of his fellow-travellers ; but it was far from being the speaker's real opinion, for the inquiries he had made at Thouars, had convinced him that the tract of country lying between Tiffauges and the coast, across which their route lay, was in a very disorganized state, and that nothing but the exercise of the utmost address and self-possession would enable the party to reach their journey's end in safety.

As they pursued their course, they met several groups of peasants eagerly pressing on towards Thouars, some laden with provisions for the use of the small garrison which D'Elbée had left in the town under the command of Cathelineau ; and others variously armed with scythes, fowling-pieces, axes, and good substantial bludgeons, well-calculated to make a deep and lasting impression on even the most stubborn republican pericranium. At every small farm-house and village which the travellers passed, the same stir and bustle prevailed, and they were frequently compelled to stop and satisfy the curiosity of the inhabitants—especially the females, who, finding that they came from Thouars, put to them an infinite number of questions respecting the condition of the town and the movements of the Seigneurs. At one farm-house where they halted a few minutes just to give their steeds a breathing, a shrewd-looking, elderly woman, who was its only tenant, after placing before them fruit, bread, and such wine as the district afforded, began catechizing them with all the circumstantial minuteness of a lawyer, observing, in justification of her long string of interrogatories, that her husband and her only son had set out but the day before for Thouars, with the intention of joining Cathelineau's division. When informed by Alphonse

that it was highly probable, as they had offered their services to the brave peasant chief, that he had enrolled them among his garrison, and consequently that she had no cause to be apprehensive for their safety, her delight at this intelligence was so great, that in the impulse of the moment she jumped up from her chair, and throwing her arms round the astonished young Seigneur, embraced him with all the ardour of a mother. This scene infinitely diverted Annette, who was in a mood to be amused with anything; and she burst into a hearty laugh, the clear, sweet, ringing tones of which at once arrested the attention of the old dame, who, after fixing on her a long and steady gaze, observed with a significant smile, as she was preparing to remount her horse:

“My dear young lady, if you wish to pass for a peasant girl, let me recommend you to disguise your voice, as well as your person!”

“Excellent advice!” said Alphonse, as they rode off. “You see, Annette, you are by no means so perfect in your part as you imagined yourself to be. If I play the small farmer no better than you do the peasant girl, Heaven help us, should we chance to encounter a party of inquisitive republicans.”

“Do not be uneasy on my account,” replied Annette, laughing; “fore-warned, you know, is

fore-armed, and if I cannot wholly disguise my voice, I can at least obviate the necessity of doing so by holding my tongue."

"Are you quite sure of that?" inquired Delille, archly. "I would not have you be too confident in your powers of self-restraint."

"Now really, papa, that is too severe. I'm sure you men are quite as fond of chattering as we poor women. Don't you remember Monsieur Servette, how often you used to complain of his talking to us incessantly about the American Revolution?"

"Ah, poor Servette!" exclaimed Delille, "I would give much to see him again, for though a mere visionary as regards politics, he was one of the best informed and most benevolent men I ever met with. I suppose, Alphonse, you were often in his company when at Paris?"

"Not so often as I could have wished," replied the young man; "for he was so absorbed in politics, into which he entered with all the enthusiasm of a devotee, that our opportunities of communicating with each other were as brief as they were rare. But though we differed as much as light from darkness in our views of public affairs, he siding with the Girondists, and I, as you know, with the court party, we still maintained feelings of good-

will towards each other. I, in particular, regarded my old tutor with the utmost reverence ; and never can I forget that to his disinterested—his magnanimous intercession with Danton in my behalf, I owe my escape from the massacres in the Bicêtre.”

“ Escape !” exclaimed Delille, with astonishment. “ Were you imprisoned then ?”

“ Yes, I was arrested as a suspected royalist,” rejoined Alphonse. “ And having been recognized in prison by a wretch named De Chantereau who, it seems, bore my family an old grudge, and had once before attempted my life, I should infallibly have fallen beneath the assassin’s steel, if it had not been for Servette’s prompt and courageous interference with the dreaded Minister of Justice.”

“ Generous old man !” exclaimed Annette, the tears starting to her eyes. “ Oh, that I could but see him once again, if only to express my sense of his exalted worth !”

“ He is indeed, a noble-minded creature,” observed Delille, “ I always thought him so ; and this adds to my regret that he should have mixed himself up with a faction who, in the prosecution of its ambitious projects, is restrained by no sense of justice or propriety.”

“ The Girondists are not all so bad as you imagine,” said Alphonse. “ There are some fine

spirits among them—Roland for instance; the stern integrity of whose character is not to be questioned, even by his bitterest adversary. His wife, too, possesses much of that loftiness of nature which history attributes to the mother of the Gracchi. I saw her more than once in Paris, and must confess that I was greatly struck with the vigour of her understanding, and the fluent grace of her conversation.”

“Heyday, this is strange language from one who is in arms for the royal cause!” exclaimed Delille, good-humouredly. “I suspect you are more than half a Girondist in your heart.”

“No,” replied Alphonse; “I believe the Girondists to be a set of misguided, mischievous, though well-intentioned democrats, who have put themselves at the head of a movement which they have no longer power to control. Left to themselves, I suspect, they would very willingly stop at the point which they have now reached; but this, their rivals, the Jacobins, will not allow, and accordingly they are driven on in spite of themselves, and are now standing on the verge of a precipice.”

“Oh, those terrible Jacobins!” exclaimed Annette, with a shudder.

“You may well call them so,” said Alphonse; “for they are wretches who cannot even plead

an honest fanaticism in extenuation of their atrocities. I once had the curiosity to go and hear their oracle, Danton, and felt my very flesh creep at the sentiments he enunciated; yet there was no denying his wonderful powers of mob-oratory. He spoke as if under the direct inspiration of a demon, and produced an effect on his audience, such as Mirabeau himself never surpassed in his happiest moods."

"But the Queen, Alphonse; you have not yet spoken to us about her," said Annette. "Is she really as beautiful as she is generally reported to be?"

"Her beauty is of a very commanding character," observed the young Seigneur; "and in mind and manners she is all that a Queen—a wife—a mother, should be. Can I ever forget with what dignified courage she demeaned herself on that awful night when a sanguinary mob thronged all the approaches to the palace, and it seemed impossible that she should escape destruction? Oh, she is, indeed, a Queen for whom a French royalist might be proud to lay down his life!"

The travellers were now approaching the small town of Argenton, where they had originally proposed to halt for the night; but as the evening came on calm and clear, with every promise of

a brilliant sunset, and Annette expressed little or no sense of fatigue, it was decided that they should push on a few miles further, and take their chance of meeting with some *cabaret* or farmhouse, where they might procure accommodation for the night, which they could scarcely fail to do, as the country round Argenton contained more thriving villages and well-stocked farms than almost any other quarter of the Bocage, and the inhabitants, with but a few insignificant exceptions, were all warm partizans of the royalist cause.

It was market-day when the party reached Argenton, consequently the town was in a great bustle; and as they rode leisurely through it, they were again beset by inquirers; and the instant it was known that they had come from Thouars, a group of men and women gathered round them, anxious to hear all about the latest movements of the Seigneurs, and more especially those of Cathelineau and Stofflet, whom they regarded with the utmost interest and affection, as belonging to their own humble order.

“I remember Jacques Cathelineau well,” said a hale, middle-aged farmer, addressing Delille; “he was a great favourite with us all at the Pin-au-Manges, for his gentleness, his courage, his respect for sacred things, and his uncommon fondness for

children. Many a time and oft has he seated my little Eugénie on his knee, and—”

“Then I am sure he must be a good man,” interrupted a frank, smiling young woman, with an infant in her arms; “for all good men are fond of children.”

“Yet for all his gentleness,” resumed the first speaker, “Cathelineau is as bold as a lion when once his spirit is roused.”

“You may say that,” observed a by-stander, who was leaning on a sort of crutch; “for I was with him, when the news was brought of the drafting for the conscription at St. Florent, and of the fight which took place between the villagers and the republicans in consequence. You should have seen how his eye flashed as he listened to the intelligence! His wife did all she could to pacify him, but he took his resolution in an instant, wiped his arms—for he had been kneading bread for his family—put on his coat, went forth and harangued his neighbours, marched with them to La Poitevinière, sounded the tocsin, and was off with about a hundred bold fellows to Jallais and Chemillé, both which he took from the republicans on one and the same day. I have good reason to remember the circumstance, for it was at Chemillé that I received this wound in my knee.”

“And is Stofflet, too, at Thouars?” inquired the farmer who had first spoken.

“No,” replied Alphonse, “he set out this morning with the army for Parthenay. But really, my friends, you must excuse us; we cannot stay to answer any more questions, for we are yet at some distance from our journey’s end; so adieu. In a few days I trust you will hear still more cheering intelligence of your brave associates, Cathelineau and Stofflet;” and lest he should be further questioned and cross-questioned, the young man put spurs to his horse, and followed by his companions, soon lost sight of the town of Argenton.

The travellers’ course had hitherto led them over a comparatively level and open country; but when they had advanced about two miles beyond Argenton, their road became more rugged, now leading down into deep hollows, now climbing up steep but not lofty hills, and now winding in zig-zag fashion amid vast ranges of fields of all sizes which lay huddled together in the strangest possible manner: here divided by hedges, whose foliage had already put on the rich varied garniture of autumn, and there only by narrow trenches, half-mud and half-water. Occasionally they passed small tracts of common land dotted

with granite rocks, and thickly covered in places with broom and furze, and sometimes with rush-fringed pools, from which rose the solitary heron startled by the sound of the horses' tread ; and then the party would descend abruptly into narrow winding valleys, through which myriads of shallow brooklets wound their sinuous course, and mingling their waters, in the rainy season, formed one extensive marsh.

The sun had been some time on the decline when the travellers came in sight of a shady wood, or rather grove, about six or eight acres in extent, along the edge of which their road ran—if "road it could be called, which road was none," being nothing more than a strip of loose stones and coarse gravel broken into holes, like some of the cross-ways that lead from village to village in South Wales. As they drew near this wood, they heard the hum of many human voices, and immediately reined up their horses, irresolute whether to advance or retreat.

"This is a wild-looking spot," observed Delille, in a low tone, as he cast an anxious glance about him, "and I do not see a single human habitation in any one direction."

"Surely, papa, you do not imagine that those

are republicans whose voices we hear in the wood before us?" inquired Annette, in tones of alarm.

"I hope not, my love—indeed, I believe not; but should such happen to be the case, we should stand a poor chance of escaping them, were we to continue our course."

"Had we not better return then?" exclaimed the terrified girl. "Do, pray, let us return, Alphonse, for you remember what Monsieur Beaupreau told us about those wretches who are roving in bands across the country, committing the most dreadful excesses."

While this brief dialogue was going forward, Alphonse had been listening with intense anxiety to the sounds that issued from the wood, in the vain hope of being able to catch something of their import; and now, in reply to Annette, he observed, encouragingly: "Cheer up, my timid little peasant-girl, and be assured that should even your worst fears be confirmed, we shall be easily able to make good our retreat; for, whoever the party may be, I strongly suspect there is not a horseman among them. However, to make sure, I will steal silently forward on foot, and endeavour—"

"Oh, do not go," said the fond girl, laying her

white hand on his arm : “ let me beg of you not to go, for you know not what may befall you ! Let us go back to Argenton. I am not in the least fatigued.”

“ Do not prevent Alphonse from going forward to reconnoitre, Annette,” said her father : “ it is the best thing he can do.”

“ But, oh, papa, think if he was to be captured or even lose his life !—Oh God, I should never know a happy hour again !”

“ Silly girl !” said Alphonse, regarding her with looks of affection, “ there is not the slightest cause to be alarmed, for the covert of these trees will be quite sufficient to conceal my approach ;” and giving his horse’s rein into Delille’s hand, he moved cautiously forward to the wood.

He had not been absent above ten minutes, when he returned with the cheering information that the sounds which had so much disquieted Annette and her father, proceeded from a party of peasants who were singing the Evening Hymn to the Virgin.

Reassured by this intelligence, the friends rode slowly forward till they came to the spot whence the sounds issued ; and beheld, in a small, sunny, open glade, close by the road, a group of about fifty peasants, male and female, who were standing

round a tall, venerable individual, dressed in clerical costume, and chanting that touching, solemn air, which no one endowed with the slightest religious sensibility—no matter what might be his creed—ever yet heard unmoved. Annette and her companions stood hushed in heart-felt reverence while the vesper hymn was proceeding; and it was indeed a delight of a profound and soul-stirring character, appealing to the imagination through the feelings, to hear that majestic stream of melody swelling up into the still evening air amid the pensive gloom of woods, Nature's noblest temple; while the golden light of the fast-declining sun shone down, like a blessing from heaven, upon the humble and earnest congregation who thus, in all sincerity of heart, offered up their orisons to their patron saint.

When the chant was concluded, a pause of a moment or so ensued; and then the Curé, having addressed a few words of exhortation to his hearers, to which they paid the most marked attention, dismissed them with his blessing, and the assembly slowly dispersed, some moving off to the opposite side of the wood, and others—among whom was the Curé—coming forward into the road where Alphonse and his associates were still standing.

“Good evening, reverend father,” said the travellers, as the old man approached.

“God’s blessing be with you, my children,” replied the Curé, gently lifting up his hands. “I presume you have only just this instant come up, or you would have joined us, as is fitting, in our usual evening service?”

“We would gladly have done so,” observed Annette, meekly, “but we feared we might disturb the thoughts of your little flock, by making our appearance among them so suddenly and unexpectedly.”

“And perhaps be regarded as intruders,” added Alphonse.

“All are welcome to my ministration who bring with them an humble and a thankful spirit,” said the Curé, impressively.

“Is it the custom in this district to celebrate evening service in the open air?” inquired Delille. “I thought that had been a practice exclusively confined to Protestants, and that even among them it had long since fallen into disuetude.”

“You are strangers to the neighbourhood, I see,” observed the Curé, “or you would know that the recent severe republican enactments against the clergy, have left us no other course to pursue. Our rulers have deprived me of my cure in the

village hard by, because I refused to take the new constitutional oath, and have given it to one who is less scrupulous ; but my flock will not abandon their old pastor, and prefer listening to my exhortations here, under the canopy of heaven, to those of the new priest in the village church ; which is consequently all but deserted."

" Yes, we have all of us sworn never again to attend mass in the church," exclaimed one of the peasants, with animation, " till you return to it as our Curé ; and this oath we will keep, let what will be the risk. Monsieur Duchaffault, who now does duty there, is wholly a stranger to us ; he knows nothing of our manners, feelings, and ways of life, and has been forced upon us by a government which we detest. But *you*, father, were born in our parish ; you have known most of us from the days when we were infants in our mothers' arms ; you have instructed our childhood ; you have been the guide, guardian, and companion of our manhood ; you have officiated at the funerals of our parents, at the marriage of our young people, and at the christening of our children ; and now that the best years of your life have been spent in our service, and old age with its infirmities has come upon you, we will not abandon you, but rather cling closer to you in your adversity than ever."

The Curé made no answer to this speech, which so simply and touchingly expressed the feelings of all his parishioners ; but tears, which he could not repress, stole down his cheeks, and showed how deeply he was affected by it.

“ Come, father,” said a young peasant, respectfully addressing the old man, “ it is time that we should return home, for the evening is wearing on, and we have yet some distance to walk. So lean on me ; it will lessen the fatigue of the way, and enable us to reach the village by sunset, the hour when Madeline said she should expect us back.”

“ A word before you go,” exclaimed Alphonse, addressing the Curé. “ Could you recommend us to some convenient halting-place for the night, in the neighbourhood ? We have been on horseback now some hours, and my companions are beginning to feel fatigued.”

“ If you will accompany us to the next village,” replied the pastor, “ I think we shall be able, among us, to furnish you with what you require ; though, Heaven knows, our means are scanty enough, for a party of republicans paid us a visit a few weeks since, and robbed us of almost everything we could call our own.”

“ The ruffians !” exclaimed Alphonse, indignantly.

Delille here hastened to change the conversation, by inquiring of the Curé whether the village, to which he alluded, lay in the road to Tiffaujes, as they were journeying direct to that town, and it was a material object to reach it with as little delay as possible.

“The village lies beyond the wood to the right of us, about half a league off,” was the pastor’s reply.

“And the road to Tiffaujes inclines to the left, is it not so?” asked Delille.

“Yes,” rejoined the Curé; “but it will be impossible for you to reach it to-night.”

“We are aware of that,” observed Alphonse; “but we would prefer halting at some place in our direct line of road, rather than going out of our way to seek one; as that would occasion a greater loss of time than we can well afford.”

After consulting a few minutes with some of his parishioners, the Curé remarked that there was a large farm-house on the other side of the hill, at about the distance of a league, where they could obtain all the accommodation they required; as the proprietor, M. Duhoux, was an old friend of his—frank, social, hospitable, and the richest farmer in the parish.

“You have described just the sort of man to

whom we would most willingly be obliged," replied Alphonse; "but we will not detain you longer, father. Come, Annette; come, Delille: we have not a minute to lose, for in less than half an hour the sun will be below the horizon. So good night, my friends; and should we ever meet again, I trust we shall be able to congratulate each other on an improved state of things."

"Le bon temps viendra!" muttered the Curé, as the travellers rode on.

"It is delightful to witness the respect and affection that exist between this old man and his parishioners," observed Delille; "they evidently look up to him as a father, and he in turn regards them all as his children. How is it possible that a social system which produces such results can be altered, except for the worse?"

"Yet the republicans will tell you, that it is a system founded in direct opposition to all the rights of man!" replied Alphonse. "Such are the opinions of even our good friend, Servette: opinions which, as I have often told him, originate in an entire misconception of the character of our peasantry."

"That is exactly my impression," said Delille; "our enthusiastic friend is a philosopher—a man of books, who has spent the best half of his life

in the retirement of his study, and knows no more of the habits, tastes and prejudices—if such they must be called—of his countrymen in the rural provinces, than an infant. I wish he had been with us just now, and I think the touching scene he would have beheld, might have gone far to stagger his faith in his new creed of liberty and equality.”

Thus conversing, they reached the foot of the hill of which the Curé had spoken, and having walked their horses up the somewhat steep ascent, gained the summit just as the sun's disc disappeared below the horizon. But the west still glowed with the radiance of the departed orb, and the illumined clouds, perfectly motionless—for not a breath of wind was stirring—lay piled up in masses on each other, exhibiting a gorgeous variety of colour, and assuming all sorts of fantastic shapes—in one place representing golden palaces, and in another, red, dusky mountains, snow-topped, and as substantial, to all appearance, as the eternal Alps, or Caucasus. Immediately below the party—almost, indeed, at their very feet, for the descent of the hill was as abrupt as its rise—lay a narrow, fertile vale, enriched with the soft verdure of pasture-land, from which a light silvery vapour was beginning to mount up ;

and with detached woods of grave and solemn aspect, from amid which the spire of more than one village church peeped forth. Peace and profound stillness brooded over the whole face of the landscape, interrupted only by the clatter of the horses' footsteps, as they descended at a brisk pace into the valley.

By the time that they were half-way across the valley, the torches which sunset had lit up in the west had one by one gone out, and no other light remained to assist them in their progress, than that sort of grey, cold, doubtful glimmer, which twilight flings down on earth. Despite, therefore, their anxiety to arrive at their journey's end for the day, they began gradually to relax their pace, for the road was rugged, and the horses were constantly stumbling; and, as well as the thickening gloom would allow, they kept an eager look out in every direction, in the hope of discovering the farm-house of which they were in quest, or encountering some belated countryman, who might put them in the right way to it. But not a soul was visible, nor were there any immediate signs of a human dwelling, though from the glance which they had cast over the valley from the brow of the hill, they knew they could not be far from the abode of men. So they held on

their course, Alphonse and Delille endeavouring between them to rouse the flagging spirits of Annette, who, having now been a long time on horseback, was quite spent with fatigue, and had scarcely spoken two words since they quitted the wood-side.

At length, just as they had passed a shady copse through the centre of which the marshy, leaf-strewn road ran, they descried a few yards before them a light, dimly gleaming through a window, and soon found to their great delight that it proceeded from a farm-house, which, from its situation and appearance, they did not doubt was the one to which the Curé had recommended them.

The noise made by their approach caught the quick ears of several dogs, who instantly gave the alarm by barking with prodigious violence, and presently a door was cautiously unbarred, and two men came out armed with pistols; and the travellers heard them, in whispers, discussing the interesting point whether or not they should go round and unchain the animals.

Guessing at once the reason of these precautions, Alphonse exclaimed aloud :

“ You need not fear us, Monsieur Duhoux : we are not republican brigands, but royalists bound for the Isle of Noirmoutier, whom the Curé of a

neighbouring village recommended to apply to you for a night's accommodation."

On hearing this explanation, Duhoux—a stout, good-humoured, elderly farmer, of a frank and cordial temperament—came round to the gate where the party stood, having just dismounted from their horses; and holding up a small lamp which he held in his left hand, narrowly scrutinized them; and then, satisfied apparently with his gaze, unlocked the gate, and bade them welcome to the shelter of his roof, at the same time directing his attendant to conduct the horses to the stable, and see that they were carefully attended to.

Duhoux then led the way, across a garden, into his house, and having ushered his guests into a cheerful, plainly furnished apartment, left them there while he went to give orders to his domestics respecting their dormitories. He soon returned, accompanied by a young female servant, who, laying a clean white cloth on the table, proceeded to cover it with bread, fruit, plain crispy-baked cakes, dried meats, wine—in short, with all the materials of a substantial supper.

Perhaps there is no sense of social enjoyment so complete as that which travellers experience when, after a long day's journey, they arrive at their halting-place for the night, just enough fatigued to

relish keenly the luxury of rest, food, and quiet. The viands—no matter how homely—discussed under such circumstances are imbued with the finest possible flavour ; the cozy chair and the cheerful lights possess greater snugness and cheerfulness than ever ; the mind, unbent for the season, indulges in an easy flow of silent thought or careless chit-chat ; and the sleep, which winds up all, is deep, tranquil, and without a dream.

Alphonse and his companions felt the full enjoyment of their position, and invigorated by their impromptu repast, conversed in the most affable and unrestrained manner with their host ; but every now and then, when Duhoux made allusions to the insurrectionary movements of the Seigneurs, and the departure of his own sons, who had but recently set out for the theatre of war, a slight shade would pass over the young man's countenance, and his thoughts would wander to his brave associates in arms and their anticipated triumphs, in which he was prevented from participating ; but when he looked at Annette, whose eyes on these occasions were turned beseechingly upon him, as if she half suspected the cause of his momentary gloom, his heart would reproach him for his selfishness, and he would address himself eagerly to subjects of more immediate interest.

Delille and his daughter retired at an early hour to rest, but Alphonse and Duhoux sat up for some hours, conversing together on the state of the neighbourhood and the prospects of the insurgent chiefs.

“You are aware, no doubt,” said Duhoux, “that the republican brigands have already been very active in this district.”

“Yes, I heard something of the sort,” replied Alphonse; “and I am surprized that you have escaped so well, known, as it seems you are, to be a devoted royalist.”

“Oh, the marauding villains did not forget me,” said Duhoux; “for about a fortnight since, a party of them did me the honour of a visit, and threatened to burn the house over my head, if I did not furnish them with a specified sum of money, which, even supposing I had had the inclination, it was out of my power to give them.”

“And how did you get rid of them?” inquired Alphonse.

“Why, as I had some reason to expect their coming,” said Duhoux, “I took good care to be prepared; and when they drew up in front of the house, I showed them such a determined body of well-armed peasants, whom I had collected from the neighbourhood, that the dastards thought it

best to hurry off without so much as firing a shot. Since then, I have seen and heard nothing of them ; but as I live in constant expectation of an attack, I have increased the number of my household, and, above all, enlisted the services of six as staunch and bold dogs, as ever grasped a man by the throat at the bidding of their master. You heard their bark just now ?”

“Indeed, I did,” replied Alphonse, smiling, “and the sound was by no means an encouraging one to a stranger at nightfall. But how comes it that you have allowed your sons to quit your side at such an emergency ? I should have thought you could have dispensed with their services less now than ever.”

“And you thought rightly,” rejoined the farmer, “but what could I do ? How could I with propriety check their zeal in the cause of the Seigneurs, when I myself am so devoted to that cause ? I kept them by my side as long as I could, but when the news reached them of the capture of Bressuire, their enthusiasm got the better of every other consideration, and away they went at a minute’s notice, with a musket on their shoulders, pistols in their belt, a stout heart within their breast, and a father’s blessing on their head.”

“The brave, noble-minded fellows!” exclaimed Alphonse, warmly, “they deserve the lasting gratitude of every loyal spirit in the Bocage!”

“Yet I cannot help thinking,” observed the farmer, “that the boys might as well have staid at home, with their old father, to protect him in case of need.”

“You must pardon their thoughtlessness,” said Alphonse, “in consideration of the generous motives that occasioned it.”

“No, no,” replied Duhoux, eagerly, who would allow no one to blame his sons but himself, “there was no thoughtlessness in the case. The boys acted perfectly right, the same as I should have done at their age. Besides, they knew that the house was well-garrisoned, and fully capable of holding out till reinforcements should arrive from the neighbourhood. I trust I shall hear of them shortly, that they have nobly distinguished themselves under the leadership of the brave Cathelineau.”

“I have no doubt that your proudest hopes will be realized,” replied Alphonse; “and for myself, I covet nothing so much as an early opportunity of fighting side by side with your gallant sons.”

“What brings you into this neighbourhood

then," asked Duhoux, bluntly, "if you are so anxious to be fighting in the ranks of the roalyists?"

"The fact is," replied the young man, with some little embarrassment, "that I have undertaken, at their pressing request, to escort my friend Delille and his daughter to the coast, where they intend to take shipping for England; but immediately my mission is discharged, I return to the seat of war; and God speed the hour!"

After a few minutes' consideration, during which the farmer looked shrewdly and good-humouredly at his guest, he replied: "Ahem, I see it all—the gentleman is—"

"I will be frank with you," interrupted Alphonse, "Delille is no farmer, notwithstanding his disguise, but a wealthy merchant of Nantes, who having been denounced by the authorities there as a royalist, is anxious to escape to England, where some relations of his wife reside. They have already been once apprehended in their attempt at flight, and I, as an old friend—"

"Not so very old, young gentleman," rejoined Duhoux, archly, "or Mademoiselle would scarcely regard you with quite so much tender interest. I saw at the first glance that you were not absolutely hateful to her."

“Perhaps not,” replied Alphonse, demurely, “for we have known each other from childhood.”

“Ay, ay, no doubt,” pursued the farmer, “and you are as much a peasant as she is. Is it not so?”

“You have guessed aright,” exclaimed the young man, who, however, not deeming it prudent to blurt out the whole truth, contented himself with stating that his father was a respected landowner in the neighbourhood of Nantes. “And now,” he added, “that I have been thus frank with you, my friend, I have to entreat that you will keep my secret, and not give my companions reason to suppose that I have divulged it to you; for Delille is a cautious, timid man, and might be apt to take alarm at, what he would be sure to call, my imprudence.”

“I will bear in mind what you say,” replied the farmer; and soon afterwards, the conversation beginning to flag, he conducted his guest to his chamber, and bade him adieu for the night.

CHAPTER XII.

“AND so you will not be tempted to prolong your stay?” inquired Duhoux of Delille, as the party were all seated at the breakfast-table on the following morning.

Delille shook his head. “It is a matter of pressing necessity with us,” he said, “to reach the coast with as little delay as possible.”

“Ah, well, if it must be so, it must; but I would gladly have retained you as my guests for some days longer, if only,” added the farmer, with a rough, cordial gallantry of manner, “that I might have an opportunity of finding favour in the eyes of Mademoiselle, for old fellows like me are so seldom honoured by the visits of youth and beauty, that they are naturally anxious to make the most of the rare God-send, and exhibit them-

selves to the greatest possible advantage. You see I have not yet outlived my vanity which, as the world says, and perhaps truly, is the last thing that leaves a Frenchman."

"If it be an object with you, Monsieur Duhoux," said Annette, with an affected embarrassment and rusticity of manner, for which she secretly gave herself great credit, "to find favour in the eyes of a poor, raw country girl like me, that object is already accomplished."

"Well observed, my pretty shepherdess," replied the farmer, casting an arch furtive glance under his half-shut eyelids at Alphonse, "well observed ; and how gracefully that blush becomes you ! Ah, my poor heart ! Really, all things considered, it is, perhaps, better that we should lose sight of each other as soon as possible, for were I to be much longer exposed to the witchery of those smiles, my peace of mind might be ruined for ever."

"I should think," replied Annette, saucily, "that at your time of life a woman's smiles could not be so very perilous."

"At my time of life, Mademoiselle ! Do you know that I am not yet seventy ? Just in the prime of life, as you may say ; my father lived to the age of ninety, and I look on myself as quite a stripling as yet !"

“What, then, do you call your two sons?” rejoined Annette, chiming in with the farmer’s humour.

“Oh, mere infants—children who have not yet cut their wisdom-teeth!”

“I fear then,” said Annette, laughing, “if Cathelineau’s division be composed of such infants, he will stand but a poor chance against the full-grown republicans.”

“Do you know the neighbourhood of Tiffauges?” inquired the cautious Delille of his host, fearing that his daughter might betray herself, if this light, careless sort of raillery were further proceeded with.

“Perfectly,” replied Duhoux; “it lies in your direct road to Machecout.”

“So I have been told,” pursued Delille; “and I heard also at Thouars that although many of the inhabitants are royalists, yet the majority of the leading men there favour the republican party.”

“You have been rightly informed,” rejoined the farmer, “and it was my intention, before you left this house, to have warned you on no account to enter the town, for suspicion and curiosity are both on the alert, and the appearance of strangers at this feverish crisis might entail on you unpleasant consequences.”

Annette turned pale at this remark, which Duhoux perceiving, said to her in the kindest and most encouraging tone: "Now, do not be alarmed, Mademoiselle, for there is no cause for anxiety, provided ordinary prudence be exerted. What I should advise, Monsieur,"—here the farmer addressed himself to Delille—"is, that instead of passing direct through Tiffauges, you stop short to-night a few hundred yards on this side of it, at the *cabaret* of an old friend of mine—a zealous partizan of the Seigneurs, who, I can answer for it, will treat you kindly; on the ensuing day you can resume your journey with perfect safety, by inclining to the left of the town, which will not lead you much out of your road, certainly not more than a league, or perhaps less."

"I think we cannot do better than follow your advice," said Delille, rising hastily from the breakfast-table, while Annette, observing her father's anxiety to be again on the move, withdrew to her chamber in order to prepare for departure, and the farmer, summoning one of his domestics, ordered him to saddle the horses, and bring them round to the front door.

"And now that we are alone for a few minutes," exclaimed Duhoux, turning to Alphonse, "let me impress on you the necessity of caution in

your proceedings. When you get a few miles beyond Tiffauges, you will find the state of the country very different from what you have hitherto found it. Bodies of republican brigands, some of whom are deserters from the army, while others have escaped from the pursuit of Charette and his troops in the Marais, are, I am told, prowling like ravenous wolves about the district, levying contributions, burning farms and villages, and committing every species of wanton excess. I have heard of more than one murder that has been perpetrated by these desperadoes, who allege in their justification, the severities that have been practised on their comrades by Charette."

"You draw a frightful picture of the state of the Marais," observed Alphonse.

"If I do so," rejoined the farmer, "it is solely in order to put you more completely on your guard. Deeply indeed should I be grieved, were I to hear that any mishap had befallen that young lady—"

"Never—never can that be," interrupted Alphonse, with warmth, "while I have strength enough left to lift an arm in her defence!"

"You must certainly be made acquainted with my boys," exclaimed the farmer, touched with the young man's generous ardour, "that is so like what

they would have said under similar circumstances. I can fancy Auguste using your very words, and his eyes flashing as yours do. Come, I see I have no great reason to fear for my pretty young friend, while she has such a bold champion by her side. And you are well armed, too!—good; that's as it should be."

Further conversation was here broken off by the return of the Delilles into the room, who advancing up to Duhoux, thanked him for his hospitality, and bade him a cordial farewell, which the kindly old farmer returned by warmly pressing Delille's hand, and, pleading the privilege of seniority, imprinting a kiss on the blushing cheek of Annette.

A few minutes, and the party were all again in the saddle; and as they rode off, Duhoux called out to Alphonse, not to forget the hint he had given him, and then, after watching them till they were fairly out of sight, the farmer returned with a thoughtful countenance into his house.

Never did a lovelier, fresher autumn morning shed its benign influence on earth, than that which now cheered the spirits of the travellers, as they resumed their journey to the coast. The light, fleecy, transparent clouds floated like so many fairy islands high up in the blue sky; the

silvery vapours of night, had risen up from the lowlands, and were rolling fast away from the sides of the hills ; the shallow, winding brooklets danced, glittered, and made music in the sunshine, as though instinct with conscious vitality ; the labourers were astir in the fields ; the cattle were lowing in the rich, emerald-green grass lands ; the birds were pouring forth their untaught melodies from every hedge, tree, and copse ; the keen, freshening wind laughed, and sang, and ran riot, as it swept with the speed of an antelope across the landscape ; in a word, life, joyous, lusty, sunny life, was everywhere in briskest activity, and the face of nature radiant with smiles, reflected as in a mirror, the glory and the beauty of the steadfast heavens.

And Annette, who more flush of beauty and full of joy than she, as she rode on this delicious morning by Alphonse's side, while the beautiful breeze freshened the roses on her cheek, heightened the lustre of her soft, fond, black eyes, and played among her rich, silky ringlets, one or two of which escaping from beneath the fillet that bound them, fell loosely down her neck, exhibiting grace even in their disarray ? Alive only to the happiness of the moment—remembering only that he was by her side, whom she most loved to see and converse

with, and that *his* eyes were fixed fondly on her, from which she most loved to catch the speaking glances of affection ; alive only to these considerations, Annette thought not of the moment of parting, but gave full and unrestrained vent to the glad emotions with which her soul was overflowing. Occasionally she would indulge in the most exuberant gaiety of conversation, to a degree, indeed, that surprized not less than it amused Alphonse, drawing the materials of enjoyment from every object on which her eye rested ; and anon she would subside into that sort of rapt, dreamy reverie, in whose very silence there is often more eloquence and feeling than could be conveyed by the most impassioned language. Her father, on the other hand, was grave, subdued, and apprehensive, and rode on for miles together without uttering more than a few brief words ; for he well knew that the hour was at hand which would test the nerve and self-possession of his young companions ; and with the distrust that age engenders, was doubtful of the issue of his enterprize, which he now almost began to repent that he had undertaken.

“ I am really surprized, Alphonse,” said Annette, with an air of mock-seriousness which the arch smile that played round her rosy lips belied, “ that

you have not yet thought fit to compliment me on the dexterous manner in which I acquitted myself as a peasant girl, when that dear old farmer was making so many fine speeches to me. You saw he had not the least suspicion who I was."

"I think, on the contrary," replied Alphonse, "that he formed a pretty shrewd guess as to who you were, if he did not actually penetrate the secret of your disguise."

"Surely not!" exclaimed the laughing girl. "My manners, language, looks, voice, all were studiously adapted to the rustic character I had assumed. I assure you, I flatter myself that my performance was perfect, and fully expected you would say so."

"My dear Annette," rejoined the young man, "you will never be able to appear other than you are, in your intercourse with strangers, notwithstanding your disguise; and God grant that you may not be reduced to the necessity of 'acting,' as you call it."

"Most fervently do I echo that wish," observed Delille, with earnestness.

"How grave you are, papa!" exclaimed Annette, struck with her father's thoughtful manner. "Surely you do not fear that we shall be again discovered and arrested by those horrid republicans?"

“Fear !” said Alphonse, with an affected laugh of indifference : “ what is there to fear ? Are we not well armed ? And even should we be stopped—which is not likely—by a party too numerous for us to resist, are not you, Annette, so perfect in your part as a peasant-girl, that it would be impossible for the most practised eye to penetrate your disguise ? Trust me, the only thing we have to fear is, that when we once enter on the Marais, and leave some of the comforts of civilized life behind us, we may not always be able to find a halting-place to our liking, in which case we may perhaps be compelled to put up with a sorry hut, or even to bivouac in the open air, which, however primitive and picturesque, is by no means a welcome contingency to folks desirous of a good night’s rest, and a supper such as we had last night.”

“ Oh, I should not at all mind bivouacing in the open air,” replied Annette, gaily ; “ on the contrary, I think I should like it, for it would have all the strangeness of novelty to recommend it, and would be something for me to boast of in after years.”

“ My dear child, how wildly you talk !” exclaimed her father. “ Who ever heard of any

rational person boasting of having passed a night in the open air, and thereby run the risk of catching a severe cold, or perhaps something worse?" And as he said this, Delille shrugged his shoulders, and pressed his elbows close into his side, as if he already felt the consequences of such an airy bivouac.

"I merely alluded to it as a novelty, papa," said Annette.

"Ay, this sort of novelty may be all very well at your age," rejoined her father; "but at my time of life it is apt to beget coughs, rheumatisms, and fevers, for which the romance of a night's lodging on the bare ground is but an indifferent compensation."

While they thus chatted familiarly together, Alphonse purposely selecting the most cheerful topics of conversation, the hours slipped unperceived away. Noon was already passed, and the day was on the wane, when from the brow of a somewhat steep eminence, they beheld, on the opposite side of a valley which was watered by the sparkling, boisterous, zig-zag stream of the rocky Sèvre, the ruins of the old castle of Tiffauges, and at no great distance from it the little town itself.

"Come, we shall have an easy journey of it

to-day, at any rate," said Alphonse; "for, if I mistake not, we are already, within a few yards of the *cabaret* to which Duhoux recommended us."

"But had we not better proceed on our course while we are in a condition to do so?" suggested Delille. "It wants some hours to nightfall, and I have not yet heard Annette complain of fatigue."

"I cannot say exactly that I am fatigued, papa," observed Annette.

"Then in that case, my love," pursued her father, "we will push on beyond Tiffauges, avoiding the direct road, and making a *détour*, as the farmer recommended. Expedition, you know, is the object we have in view."

"True," replied Alphonse; "expedition is of the utmost consequence to us—to me especially; still I think we should act wisely to follow Duhoux's advice to the letter, for rely on it, he had sound reasons for what he said when he recommended us to halt on this side the town. It may save us much time to do so."

"He was very urgent on the subject, papa, as you may remember," said Annette.

"So he was," replied Delille, thoughtfully; "and as he knows the district well, it is perhaps better, all things considered, that we should implicitly follow his directions."

“And, doubtless, this is the very *cabaret* he spoke of,” exclaimed Alphonse, pointing towards a small, but neat-looking house which stood by the road-side, a few paces in front of them.

Quickening their pace, the travellers soon reached the *cabaret* in question, and met with a most cordial reception from the landlord, the instant he heard that they were friends of Duhoux—a fact which satisfied him that they were attached, like himself, to the party of the Seigneurs, whose cause, as he assured them, more than once, with an ominous shake of the head, was fast declining among the degenerate authorities of Tiffauges.

Having done justice to a plain but excellent repast, Alphonse took the opportunity of Delille’s dropping off into a quiet, post-prandial nap, to propose to Annette a stroll to the ruins of the Castle of Tiffauges, to which she readily assented, as the evening was a delightful one, and it wanted yet some time to nightfall.

They purposely took the most retired way to the ruins, not wishing to expose themselves to the inquisitive gaze of strangers, in a neighbourhood supposed in some degree to be friendly to republicanism; and on quitting the high road, or what did duty for a high road, they crossed a wild open bit of country, which led them to a deep-sunk

valley, through which flowed the Sèvre. The sides of this secluded little dell were clothed with gorse-bushes, and strewed with masses of grey rock, and the bottom was carpeted with rough grass, on which several sheep were feeding. Hard by was the castle, perched on the summit of a rock, which was almost surrounded by the winding river, and wearing an air of stern melancholy, that forcibly contrasted with the smiling sylvan aspect of the rest of the landscape.

As they approached this "skeleton of unfleshed humanity"—to quote Wordsworth's forcible and imaginative expression—Alphonse reminded Annette of the wild legend connected with the mouldering pile. "Perhaps you are not aware," he observed, "that this was once one of the strongholds of the terrible Gilles de Laval, the original of Blue Beard—that striking nursery-tale, which is so well known throughout Europe."

"I remember the legend perfectly," replied Annette; "and how, as a child, I used to be terrified by it. Indeed, even now, so indelible are the impressions made on us in infancy, I should shudder at the idea of being compelled to pass a night within these crumbling old walls; and should be sure to fancy in every rush of the wind, that came sweeping through the roofless

courts, that I heard the voice of the murderer summoning me to prepare for death."

"Now I, on the contrary," said Alphonse, smiling, "have so little of the spirit of fancy about me, that I could pass a night here very comfortably"—they had by this time reached the ruins—"for, as you see, a farm-house has been built within the walls, and such a building—so snug, so social, so thoroughly domestic and familiar—is fatal to the terrible and romantic associations attached to the spot."

"The castle must have been of great strength and extent in its time," exclaimed Annette, casting a curious glance about her; "but what an air of desolation it now exhibits! Does it not remind you, Alphonse, of some stricken mourner, sorrowing without hope in the vale of years, and encompassed by the shadow of death? Observe, too, the strange junction of extremes that is presented by the thriving farm, and the mouldering edifice within which it nestles: the one, the picture of meek, homely content, the other, of majestic gloom and sullen decay!—the one, an emblem of the present, the other, of the past; and both making a mute but eloquent appeal to the feelings, through the medium of the fancy!"

As Annette thus spoke, she seated herself on

a crumbling mass of brick-work, partially covered by moss that had detached itself from the walls, and lay nearly in the centre of the court-yard, and Alphonse took his place beside her. "How changed the scene," exclaimed the former, "since the days when these halls teemed with life, and joy and splendour; and high-born dames and gallant cavaliers passed out from yonder gateway, which now echoes but to the tread of the thoughtless peasant, or of some chance travellers like ourselves! Can language speak more forcibly to the heart, or experience point a more impressive moral, than does every brick of this forlorn and ghastly pile? I read here a finer homily than Bossuet ever delivered from the pulpit; and recognize the presence of a sterner monitor than even he was, who daily reminded the aspiring Philip of Macedon that he was mortal. But look, Alphonse, look; did you ever see a more brilliant sunset? The opposite side of the valley seems absolutely flooded with light."

The spectacle was indeed a striking one. The western sky seemed as though it were all on fire, and poured down a stream of effulgence on the landscape that brought out its minutest features into vivid relief—the grey crags, the bright green turf, the dancing stream of the Sèvre, the tangled

copse, the spreading gorse—to each and all these objects the fast-sinking orb imparted such a warm, ruddy, cheerful glow, as none could witness without experiencing the most pleasurable emotions.

“How happily could I pass away life in such a peaceful scene as this,” exclaimed Annette, as they slowly retraced their steps through the valley, “with no stirring, ambitious aspirations to disturb the even current of my days!”

“And with you by my side, dearest,” whispered Alphonse, “I, too, could be well content to spend what may remain to me of life in this secluded valley.”

“Not so,” replied Annette, with a touch of sadness in her voice, “you would soon be weary of such an inactive, monotonous existence, and your thoughts would be constantly wandering to the field of glory. Though you yourself may be unconscious of it, yet trust me, a marked change has taken place in your character since the last evening walk we took together at Nantes. The troubled events of the times have quickened feelings and called forth in you energies which you were not aware you possessed, and which have now taken such absolute possession of your mind, that but little room is left for softer emotions.”

“Oh, Annette!” exclaimed Alphonse, “how can you do me such injustice? What I once was, I am still, I ever shall be—your fond, devoted—”

“Well, well,” interrupted Annette, “I will still dream that love of fame is not the one engrossing subject of our thoughts, even though I observed the proud flashing of your eye when Duhoux was speaking of the scenes at Chemillé and Bressuire. Alphonse, others might be mistaken, but I could not.”

“You would not speak so, Annette, if you knew how constantly you were in my thoughts during my stay in Paris; with what joy I looked to the period when we should again meet; with what eagerness on my return to Nantes I hurried to your home; and what a withering blight fell on my heart when I heard of your sudden flight to England! Not even in the solitude of my cell at the Bicêtre, when I expected every moment a summons to the scaffold, were my spirits so completely subdued, as when the conviction flashed across my mind that the same country held us both no longer! The springs of hope and youth seemed dried up within me; a light had vanished from my path; and only in the wild excitement of action could I regain anything like tranquillity.

But we met again—ever blessed be the hour!—and you yourself witnessed the emotion which filled my heart to overflowing at that moment. Dearest Annette, be just, be generous, and believe that earth holds no being so sacred in my eyes as yourself. If ever man spoke the language of truth, of passion, of pure, lasting devotion, I now speak that language to you. Can you, then—will you, longer doubt the fervour of that affection which can cease only when the pulses of my life cease to beat? Oh, that my whole soul could be laid before you, that you might at once read—”

“I do not doubt you, Alphonse, I never did doubt you,” exclaimed the trembling girl, affected to tears by the energy with which her companion spoke. “But forgive me, if for a moment I feared that the excitement of ambition and the stirring scenes in which you have been lately engaged—and to which, alas, you will too soon return!—might cause you to think less tenderly than you once did, of the friend and playmate of your childhood—your adopted sister Annette.”

“Never, dearest! If I again court the stir and bustle of a soldier’s life, it will be chiefly because by so doing, I may hope in some degree to divert the gloom which must fall on my spirits

when you are no longer by my side. But when once this unhappy war is at an end—”

“Do not speak of it,” said Annette, interrupting him, “I cannot bear to hear you allude to a subject on which I cannot think without a shudder. Oh, what would I not give that those peaceful times could return, when together on summer evenings we used to ramble along the banks of the Loire, while hope was ever by our side strewing flowers on our path, and happiness had not yet become a dream of the past! But let us quicken our pace, Alphonse, for my father will be wondering at our long absence, and anticipating with his usual nervous solicitude that some mishap has befallen us. I have said, perhaps, more than I ought to have said—certainly more than I intended to have said; but I know not why it was, a cloud came suddenly across my mind; and even this pleasant walk on this lovely evening has had no other effect than to depress my spirits, perhaps because it reminds me too vividly of those we used to take in the days that are gone, or perhaps, Alphonse, because it may be the last we shall ever take together!”

By this time the gorgeous hues of sunset had gradually faded away in the west; the flush of warmth and life had disappeared from the rocks, the

stream, the copse, and the rich green carpet of the valley ; and the cold, dull grey of confirmed twilight had settled down on all things. A mist, too, heavy and drenching in its character, began to rise up from the lowlands, and soon wrapped in its pall the sombre ruins of the castle, which loomed dimly through it like a spectre, all its proportions magnified twofold in the obscurity.

As they gained the opposite side of the valley to that on which the castle stood, Annette, glancing back on the darkened landscape, observed to her companion :

“ How greatly has twilight added to the melancholy aspect of those ruins, to which even the glowing sunset itself could scarcely impart a smile ! What has become of those bright, golden splendours, instinct with cheerfulness, which but half an hour since hung over the illumined valley ? They are gone—all gone—apt emblems of the buoyant hopes and sunny joys of life, which fade and die off at the very moment when we deem our hold on them to be the most secure ! ”

“ Why, Annette,” exclaimed Alphonse, smiling, “ you are quite in a moralizing mood this evening. And so melancholy too. Come—come, cheer up, you must not give way to low spirits, but look forward with confidence to the return of better times.

It is never too late to despair, to quote my father's favourite maxim."

"You say truly, Alphonse, 'tis weak—criminal—to abandon oneself to gloom. But I could not help it; the feeling rose suddenly and unbidden in my mind, and to you, as to another self, I gave it utterance. Now the momentary cloud is past, and—"

"Ay, now you speak more like yourself, Annette; and now I again recognize the old familiar tones of your voice, whose accents, like your own sweet, happy nature, should be always attuned to cheerfulness!"

With these words, they reached the *cabaret*, just as the faint moon began to hang out her mild lamp in the sky.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE country in the immediate neighbourhood of Tiffauges is hilly and well-wooded, and presents altogether a very picturesque aspect, which it retains as far as the little town of Montaigu, when the sylvan appearance of the landscape begins gradually to disappear, becoming more open, flat and barren, though patches of rich pasture-land, well stocked with cattle, are still here and there to be met with. In the vicinity of the coast, however, the ground terminates in salt marshes, and is everywhere intersected by ditches and canals. It was in this district, in which Charette now commanded, that the Vendean insurrection broke out with the greatest violence. Indeed the inhabitants were almost unanimous in their detestation of the republicans, who had treated them with the most ruthless severity.

Some time had now passed since the first breaking out of hostilities, and fresh troops having been poured in on the country, which was subjected to all the rigour of martial law, the exasperated peasants applied, as has been already observed, to Charette to take the command of them ; and under his leadership they carried on the war with great spirit and perseverance, carefully avoiding pitched battles, and endeavouring, whenever occasion offered, to cut off the enemy in detached parties. To a certain extent they had been successful, but their prospects were not much bettered thereby, for those who escaped their vengeance, if they did not rejoin the army, spread themselves over the country, plundering all classes with equal impartiality, no matter whether they professed republican or monarchical opinions.

Soon after quitting the neighbourhood of Tiffauges, the travellers, as they had been led to anticipate, found themselves entering on a locality which bore all the marks of having been recently subjected to the worst licence of civil war. Ruined and depopulated villages ; roofless farm-houses, portions of whose blackened walls lay strewed in fragments on the ground ; uprooted gardens ; thick and leafy hedges, the slow growth of years, burnt down to the very banks from which they rose ;

such were the distressing objects which met the travellers' gaze in every direction, and cast a gloom on their spirits, which they vainly endeavoured to conceal from each other.

They met few people on their road, and those whom they did meet, no longer wore a frank, cheerful demeanour, but were morose, reserved, suspicious, and eyed them with a vindictive scowl, as though more than half persuaded that they were republicans in disguise. Sometimes, but not often, they would catch a distant glimpse of a labourer or two at work in the fields, or engaged in the almost hopeless task of rendering some half-burnt cottage fit again for the purpose of habitation; and once, as they passed through a small village, an old man and a group of children, all rags and wretchedness, crawled forth from the ruins, but after casting a keen, distrustful glance at them, retreated back into their lair, without taking the slightest notice of the questions put to them.

The travellers had been journeying rapidly on for some hours, without having tasted any other refreshment than some oaten cakes and dried fruits, which Alphonse had taken the precaution to bring with him from the *cabaret* where they had last halted, when, as evening drew on, they came to a small farm-house utterly in ruins, and the walls of

which were still smoking. As they passed it, the young man's quick eye observed two bodies half-reduced to cinders, lying among the rubbish on the ground, and a stifled scream from Annette convinced him that she had seen the same ghastly objects.

"Horrible!" she exclaimed, averting her eyes with a shudder.

"Hush!" whispered Alphonse, "not a word." Then addressing Delille, in order to call off the timid and nervous old man's attention from the ruins. "Look," he said, "at that frowning mass of clouds to the right of us; I think we had better make all possible haste onward, for, if I mistake not, we shall have a violent storm before long."

"You are right," replied Delille, looking up in the direction to which his companion pointed, and instantly hurried on at a rapid pace, observing in a trembling tone of voice: "if I may judge from the smoke that issued from the cottage which we passed a few minutes since, the republicans have not quitted the work of destruction many hours. God grant we may not fall in with them!"

"No fear of that," replied Alphonse, affecting a *nonchalance* which he was far from feeling: "having done the work of mischief they will take care to fly the district, in case of being attacked by

the infuriated peasantry. The ruffianly are always cowards ; and well-armed as we are, we may bid defiance to their fury. Besides, it will not be long now before we fall in with Charette ; and once within his lines, we are safe."

The party had not proceeded much more than a mile beyond the farm-house where Annette's feelings had sustained so severe a shock, when the wind, which up to this time had been blowing pretty freshly, driving before it heavy masses of ragged, spongy clouds, died suddenly away ; a close, oppressive heat succeeded ; the sun, which at intervals for the last hour or more, had shone forth with a wild and ominous radiance from between the chinks of the lurid vapours that were thickly clustered together in the west, was wholly blotted out ; and one uniform mass of dull, leaden, sombre clouds hung over the landscape like a funeral pall. It was evident that the evening—how unlike the last which Annette and Alphonse had spent together in the Castle of Tiffauges !—was about to be ushered in by a furious thunder-storm ; and many and anxious glances the travellers cast about them, in the hope of discovering some cottage where they might find shelter from the violence of the tempest.

"It will be a wild night," exclaimed Delille ;

“the storm comes on apace ; and as there is not a house, not even so much as a shed, within sight of us, I do not think we can do better than go back to the farm-house which we passed a short while since. Though in ruins, we may possibly find some portion of it in a condition to afford us a temporary shelter.”

“No, no—not for the world,” said Annette, earnestly ; “ten thousand times rather would I be exposed to the whole fury of the tempest, than take refuge in that horrid place ! Don’t think of it, papa, pray don’t.”

“Not think of it ?” exclaimed her father, surprised at her earnestness, “why not ? Surely even an imperfect shelter is better than none at all.”

“Yes, yes, papa, that is quite true ; nevertheless—”

“Annette agrees with me,” said Alphonse, interrupting her further speech, “that it is much better to go on than to go back, for we are now some distance from the farm-house ; and if I may judge from those fields before us, we cannot be far off some human habitation.”

While he was speaking a low growl of distant thunder was heard, and presently a few heavy drops of rain began to fall.

“ God help us !” said Delille, his natural timidity of character breaking through all restraints. “ I know not what we shall do. Exposed to a furious tempest in a bleak open country of which we know nothing, where we can find no shelter, and which is infested with desperate ruffians—”

“ Courage—courage, my friend,” exclaimed Alphonse, “ the very worst that can befall us is a severe drenching, and the loss of our supper.”

“ You forget the bivouac in the open air which you so kindly and considerately promised us yesterday,” said Annette, making an effort to appear cheerful, in order to raise her father’s drooping spirits.

“ True, that indeed is a luxury not to be forgotten,” replied Alphonse ; “ but I think, after all, we shall be deprived of it ; for, if my eyes don’t deceive me, I see a cottage, or something very like one, at the edge of that field yonder,” pointing to a small plot of enclosed ground a few yards ahead of them.

“ It is a cottage sure enough,” observed Delille, “ so we are more lucky than I thought we should be.”

They soon reached the welcome place of shelter, and just in time, for hardly had Alphonse tethered the horses to an old ricketty garden-fence which

stood beside the cottage, when down came the hissing, spluttering rain with all the fury of a cataract.

But, alas ! their condition was not much improved. If they escaped the tempest, it was only to encounter a shock far more trying ; for on entering the dwelling, which was of the humblest order, they beheld a young girl, apparently not beyond her eighteenth year, seated beside a truckle-bed, moaning and wringing her hands hysterically, and ever and anon looking intently on an object which was closely covered up in a threadbare blanket ; while on a chair near her, sate an old woman furrowed with years and grief, rocking herself to and fro, and looking the very image of hopeless despair.

The noise made by the party on entrance, alarmed the inmates of the cottage, especially the girl, who starting up with threatening gestures exclaimed :

“ You shall not take him from me ! He is not dead, but only sleeping, and will come back to life on the third day, for he fell in the cause of the holy church ; and the Curé has told us that a miracle will be wrought on behalf of those who fall in that cause. No, he is not dead, and you shall not touch him. Would you bury the living ?

Speak, Henri," she added, in tones of the most touching pathos, as she resumed her seat, and hung over the senseless body, "speak! Alas! he cannot; the hour is not yet come when he will speak, and know me again."

Inexpressibly shocked at this frantic appeal, Alphonse and Delille stood silent and irresolute near the door, not knowing how to act, or in what language to address the mourner. Annette, however, with the quicker tact and self-possession of her sex, quietly advanced towards the maniac—for it was plain by her manner that her brain was half-shattered—and addressing her in low and gentle tones said:

"You need not fear us, my poor girl; we are friends, not enemies, and would sooner die than do you the slightest injury."

"Then you have not come to take him away from me?" exclaimed the girl, looking beseechingly in Annette's face; and reading in the sweet expression of that countenance something that reassured her, she became gradually more composed, and turning to the old woman who was staring at the travellers with mingled fear and horror; she resumed: "They are not republicans, mother, and will not take him away from us."

"No, we are not republicans, but we are their

enemies, and your friends, and the friends of your Curé and the holy Church," said Alphonse, drawing near to the dame, "so fear nothing; we had no wish to alarm you, but being overtaken by the storm, came in here for shelter."

"You are welcome," said the poor old creature, in a tone of voice almost inarticulate from grief; "but you have come in an evil hour to the house of mourning. You see my unhappy child there—God help me! I fear she will never be altogether in her right mind again."

"Time, I hope, will assuage her grief, and restore her senses," said Delille, taking his seat beside the dame.

"Oh, you know not her story, Monsieur," was the desponding reply, "or you would not speak so. But two days since she was the happiest girl in the village, and was to have been married to our young neighbour, Henri; but he was shot yesterday by a party of republicans while attending mass in the fields. My poor girl saw him fall, and caught his last sigh; and ever since she has kept watch by his side, believing, as she once heard our Curé say, that he will be restored to life, because he fell while engaged in performing the rites of our holy Church. She knows not, and I fear she will never know, that Henri is dead—

dead!" and as she repeated the last word, her head drooped heavily on her chest.

"No, not dead—he is not dead, mother!" exclaimed the bereaved girl, with impatience. "Who could have had the heart to kill Henri—so kind and gentle as he was to me, to you, and all who knew him? Look at his countenance—see, there is still a smile on it, as if he knew who was sitting beside him! How can he be dead with that sweet smile on his face?"

These words were addressed to Annette, who, incapable of making any reply, turned away her head, in order to conceal the tears that were fast falling from her eyes.

"You weep!" continued the mourner. "How strange. I cannot weep! no, even though I saw his heart's blood flowing! Oh, God, if he should be dead!" and as this idea suddenly flashed across her mind, showing that, however darkened, it was not totally eclipsed, she threw herself on the bed, which shook beneath the fierce convulsion of her grief.

But this imperfect twilight gleam of consciousness was only momentary. As the dark shadow again passed over her brain, her grief diminished; she resumed her former position, and looking again on the countenance which wore that calm, languid expression so often the result of gun-shot

wounds, she said with a vacant smile, in reply to Annette, who gently entreated her to go and sit beside her mother :

“ No, no—I must not—cannot quit him ; for when I was ill, he never quitted me, but used to come and sit by me for hours, and read to me, and talk to me, and make me so happy by his presence, that I hardly felt I was ill.”

While the afflicted girl was thus giving vent to her emotions, Delille did his best to console her mother, and instructed her what course to pursue towards her child, advising her for the present not to discourage her wild fancies ; but should a gleam of consciousness again break forth, to give it every encouragement, and to wean her gradually back to reason. As she had not yet had a moment's repose since the fatal shot was fired, it was far from improbable, argued the speaker, that wearied nature would in a few hours assert its rights ; and that after a night's repose, she might wake much improved in mind. The dame caught eagerly at this suggestion ; and was still further consoled by Delille's promise that, at the next house at which he stopped, he would take care that some one should be dispatched who would pay the requisite attention to them both.

Meanwhile the fury of the storm increased ; the lightning grew more vivid, and the thunder, no longer bellowing faintly in the distance, drew near with many a deafening roll, 'till at length a tremendous clap, crashing right overhead, seemed as though it would rend the very heavens asunder.

Alphonse and Delille both started to their feet, for the cottage shook with a violence that threatened to bring the whole fabric about their ears ; and at that moment the quick trampling of horses' hoofs was heard, and the young man rushing to the window saw, in the deepening gloom of the evening, the steeds which he had fastened, securely as he thought, to the garden-fence, galloping along the road at a headlong pace that bade defiance to all pursuit. Terrified by the bright, blue glare of the lightning which flashed with blinding radiance full in their eyes, and the last stunning thunder-clap whose uproar was as the discharge of a thousand pieces of artillery, the half-maddened animals had broken loose from their fastenings, and in their desperate struggle to extricate themselves, had torn down a great portion of the fence.

When Alphonse caught sight of them, they were already at a considerable distance from the cottage, tearing on at their utmost speed, and before he turned away from the window, they

were completely out of sight. For a moment he stood like one stupified, but he quickly recovered himself and resumed his seat by Delille, who, engaged in the task of consoling the old woman, had not observed his agitation.

“This is one of the most fearful storms I ever remember to have witnessed,” said Delille, in a low voice; “but its very violence makes me hope that it will be of short duration.”

“The clouds were breaking when I looked out just now,” rejoined Alphonse, “and the rain had nearly ceased; the wind, too, is getting up again, which is a favourable sign.”

“And the moon rises early, I think?” observed Delisle.

Alphonse replied in the affirmative, whereupon his companion rejoined: “Then, in that case we had better be on the move again, as soon as possible, for I have gathered from this old woman that there is a *cabaret* about a league off, where we shall be sure to get all we want. Were not those your words, dame?”

The speaker had to repeat his question twice before it was fully comprehended by her to whom it was addressed, who at length made answer, with the fretful impatience of age and sorrow: “Yes, yes—all you want—you will get all you want—

I told you so awhile since," and then with a heavy sigh, while the words, "my poor child!" escaped her, she relapsed into her former state of stupor.

"I am delighted to hear that we are so near a *cabaret*," said Alphonse; "for otherwise I know not what we should have done. You will be distressed to learn that we have lost our horses, and that if we resume our journey, we must do so on foot."

"Lost our horses!" exclaimed Delille, with a look of dismay and astonishment: "how, when was this? You surely were not thoughtless enough to leave them at large when we dismounted?"

"On the contrary," returned the young man, "I fastened them, securely as I imagined, to the garden-fence; but about a quarter of an hour since they broke loose, terrified by the lightning; and when I caught a glimpse of them, immediately after that last terrific clap, they were a long way off, tearing across the country at a rate that precluded all chance of coming up with them. But do not alarm yourself; if the *cabaret* be really so close at hand, we shall be able to reach it on foot without any very serious inconvenience."

"But how can we rely on what this poor distraught old woman tells us?" rejoined Delille.

"It is a most provoking business, and may be attended with serious consequences to us all."

"You view the matter in too sombre a light," said Alphonse. "Depend on it there can be no mistake as regards the *cabaret*; your question was understood and answered explicitly."

Delille here rose and went to the door, which he opened and looked around on the night. The rain had by this time entirely ceased; the heavy clouds had drifted loosely away before a brisk, drying wind, and large clear spaces of blue sky were visible, in which already twinkled a few of the earlier stars.

"Since, then, it seems that we have no alternative," said Delille to his young friend, who had joined him at the door, "the sooner we set out for this *cabaret* the better; for the weather cannot be trusted for any length of time, though there is every present appearance that it will hold up, till we reach our journey's end, for the night.

He then addressed himself to Annette, who, during all this time had been endeavouring to tranquillize the distracted mind of the poor girl; and in a few hurried words explained to her the embarrassing accident that had befallen them, and the necessity that existed for continuing the journey on foot, and without delay.

Much to his surprize, she heard the tidings of their loss with perfect equanimity, and expressed her readiness and even eagerness to depart, in order, she said, that they might be the sooner enabled to dispatch assistance to this desolate family, who seemed totally friendless.

“When I think of *their* sufferings,” she exclaimed, with that noble disinterestedness so characteristic of her charming sex, “I feel that I should be selfish, indeed, were I to repine at such a comparatively trivial loss as we have just now sustained! So come, papa, I am quite ready to set out,” and bidding adieu to the young mourner, who, disturbed as she was in mind, was still sensible of her gentle attentions, she rose from the truckle-bed whereon she had till now been seated, folded her cloak about her, and going up to the old woman, said, in her most soothing tones: “Farewell, dame! may God in His mercy restore your daughter to consciousness, and give peace to your declining age!” and with moistened eyes she seized her hand, and pressed it tenderly within her own.

The words, so kind and affectionate, the voice so sweet and touching, and still more the action which accompanied them, went at once to the heart of the afflicted parent, who, with more of

animation than she had yet evinced, exclaimed :
“ A mother’s blessing be with you !—if the blessing of the helpless, the aged and the destitute, be worthy to be held in regard ! I ask nothing but that my child may be restored to me ; but no, no—I fear it may not be ! No human power can bring back the mind which God has taken away ! She knows me not—she will never know me again ! I shall go before her to the grave, and she will not miss me ! ” and with these words she again relapsed into apathy, and took not the least notice of Alphonse and Delille, when they approached to bid her farewell.

The night was frosty, the air fresh and bracing, and the moon, which had already risen, poured down a clear, mellow light on earth. For the first five or six hundred yards the travellers’ path was beset with deep ruts and pools, which they had no little difficulty in avoiding ; but gradually, as they reached the brow of a wide expanse of tableland, where not a house nor even a tree was to be seen, their road greatly improved ; and Delille, who till now had been unusually impatient and peevish, began to get into a somewhat better humour, though he could not refrain, every now and then, from expressing his fears that they would be disappointed of their *cabaret*, and con-

juring up a thousand horrors should such prove to be the case. As for Annette, her thoughts were with the poor maniac; and, indifferent to all other considerations, she repeatedly consulted Alphonse as to the steps they should take for procuring her the requisite aid.

“You think of every one else but yourself, Annette,” said the young man, struck with admiration of her disinterestedness.

“And do you really think,” she replied, “that I deserve praise for being affected by the sight of such anguish as I have beheld to-night? Surely, the painful spectacle must have struck home to your heart, too !”

“Yes, yes, of course,” rejoined Alphonse; “but when you are by my side, dearest, under circumstances of difficulty, if not danger—I may say this to you, though I dare not hint it to your father—I have neither eyes, ears, nor feelings for aught else.”

“For shame, Alphonse !” exclaimed Annette, with more indignation than she had ever yet exhibited towards him; “how can you be so selfish? What are my sufferings compared to those of that poor bereaved girl? Is it possible you can have witnessed unmoved the touching spectacle of her grief? Surely—surely I cannot

have been mistaken in you! You have said this merely to try my temper. Come, confess now that you have; and do not let me imagine that the friend—the brother I have so long loved, is without a heart!”

The young man warmly repudiated the idea that he was deficient in the requisite sensibility; and having thus succeeded in making his peace with Annette—a task, by the bye, of no great difficulty—he proceeded to talk of matters that more immediately concerned themselves; in which he was joined by Delille, whose fears of being waylaid and murdered, became momentarily more manifest.

Nor was he wholly without excuse for his apprehensions: for the travellers were now some way advanced on a broad, level plain, and which, to all appearance, was uninhabited; should they chance, therefore, to encounter a band of marauders, they would have nothing to trust to but their own courage and self-possession; and what would avail the skill and determination of two men, even though well armed, in the event of their being met by a gang double or treble their number? Neither would they have the slightest possibility of evading discovery; for the moon grew brighter the higher she rose in the

cloudless, starry firmament, rendering objects visible at a considerable distance off, and shining on numerous small, shallow pools, with which the table-land was dotted. At every fresh sweep of the wind across the plain, which blew in those capricious gusts so frequent after severe storms, before the weather has fully settled down, Delille made sure that he heard the sound of human voices, and drew his daughter closer to his side, while, at the same time, he kept casting stealthy glances about him, and moving forward at that irregular pace, which indicates a feverish and excited state of the nerves.

The party had proceeded about two miles across the bleak, sterile plain, when, much to their delight, they beheld before them at no great distance, a square, insulated building, standing distinctly out in the moonlight. As they drew near this desired object, they could see a light glimmering in one of the lower rooms ; and making towards it at their utmost speed, they soon arrived at the door of a plain, substantial *auberge*—of superior pretensions to the *cabaret* of which the old woman had spoken—which stood alone, in a spot where the rude cross-roads met, two of which led apparently in the direction of the coast. Just beyond this *auberge*, looking towards the west, symptoms of cultivation

made their appearance, and the ground descended by a gradual slope, towards a small cluster of detached cottages about a mile off, surrounded with fields and tracts of grazing land. Still further in the distance, the country resumed its wild and naked aspect, and seemed as though it was intersected with numerous canals, which, viewed in the moonshine, looked like so many tiny threads of silver winding through the landscape.

In answer to Alphonse's repeated summons, the landlord appeared at the door of the *auberge*, with a lamp, and after a hasty survey of their persons, ushered the travellers across a hall into a moderate-sized room, whose walls were hung with a coloured print of Louis XVI., and a dirty, torn map of one of the adjacent provinces. The hearth—a large, yawning space—was garnished with a pair of old-fashioned dogs, whose queer visages were overlaid with brass, which, at the tips of their snouts and the most prominent parts of their fat cheeks, had been worn through by repeated polishings, and presented strange patches of black. On either side the hearth stood several comfortable chairs modelled after the form of a horse-shoe, and presenting the most unequivocal indications of antiquity.

“A pleasant apartment this, one of the best in the house,” said the landlord—a smiling, inquisitive,

voluble little man, whose wheedling manner and infinite grimace showed that he was from a different part of the country—"a pleasant apartment," he repeated, placing lights upon the table, "but not so often used as I could wish, for these disturbances in La Vendée frighten away all travellers from the district. Ah, well! it can't be helped," and he gave an expressive shrug of the shoulders, intending to imply that he was a philosopher, and resigned to his lot.

He was running on in this familiar and loquacious strain, and between whiles stealthily eyeing the party with uncommon keenness, when Alphonse good-humouredly interrupted him, with a request that he would furnish them with some supper as soon as possible, as the night-air had given them an appetite which ill-brooked unnecessary delays.

"Ay, ay," said the landlord, with a knowing leer, "I know well what a farmer's appetite is. The countrymen of the Bocage are no strangers to this house, though I seldom see them now, for they are too busily engaged with their Seigneurs at Bressuire and elsewhere. You'll stay the night here of course?" he continued, with an inquiring glance at Alphonse; and having been answered in the affirmative, he said that he would send in his wife, imme-

diately to show Mademoiselle the room intended for her accommodation.

As he spoke, the landlady appeared. She was a sullen, morose, unhappy-looking woman ; and without vouchsafing a word, she beckoned Annette to follow her, and opening a door at that end of the apartment which fronted the window, she led the way up a straight, narrow staircase into a small room, which communicated with a larger one wherein were two beds.

When, after a hurried inspection of her dormitory, Annette returned into the supper-room, she found the table well laden with homely, substantial viands, to which Alphonse and her father were doing the most exemplary justice, while the fussy little landlord was lighting them a wood-fire in the hearth, and talking the while with amazing volubility :

“ You go armed, I see, Messieurs, and you are right, for in times like the present, one hardly knows one’s friends from one’s enemies. For my part, I live in a constant state of apprehension, and daily expect that the same fate will befall me, that has already befallen so many of the neighbouring farmers and peasants.”

“ Of course,” said Alphonse, “ you take every

precaution against an assault by keeping your household well armed?"

"Well armed!" replied the landlord; "of what use would that be? What resistance could I make against a body of brigands such as plundered one of the adjoining villages the other day? No, I take my chance like my neighbours."

"You are not a native of La Vendée, I think," observed Delille.

"Why, no, not exactly," rejoined the landlord, with hesitation.

"Have you been long in the neighbourhood?" asked Alphonse.

"I succeeded the late proprietor of this *auberge* about three months since, and heartily wish I had never had anything to do with the country, for there is little money to be made now, whatever may have been the case formerly;" then, as if anxious to divert all further inquiries from himself, the landlord resumed, in his most wheedling manner: "you are bound for the coast, I presume, Messieurs? Many royalists are bound for the same quarter just now."

"Who told you we were royalists?" inquired Alphonse, perplexed, and somewhat annoyed at the fellow's inquisitiveness, though he strove to

conceal his vexation ; “ we are nothing of the sort, but simply plain, humble farmers, who find our own household affairs quite enough to engross our attention, without troubling our heads with politics.”

To all appearance the landlord gave full credit to this statement, but had Alphonse narrowly watched him, he would have seen an exulting expression in his shrewd, restless, grey eye, which told that he was not deceived, whatever he might allege to the contrary.

When the man had quitted the room, Delille observed : “ A clever, good-natured, bustling little fellow that : very different to his wife, who is, without exception, one of the sourest and most unsocial-looking creatures I ever saw.”

“ On the contrary,” said Annette, “ I think his wife infinitely the least equivocal character of the two, for when we were together in the bed-room just now, and I expressed to her my wish that she should send assistance, or go herself to the poor maniac and her mother, and offered her gold by way of a bribe, her sullen reserve immediately disappeared, and she replied readily and even tenderly : ‘ Keep your gold, Mademoiselle, I have heard of the poor people’s affliction, and will do all I can to comfort them without fee or reward ;’ and

then she sighed, as if she had something on her mind which she would fain tell me, but durst not. I suspect that her husband has something to do with her evident unhappiness, and as I watched him narrowly while he was drawing us out, as he thought, I marked that, in his dubious smile and sycophantic manner, which occasioned me no little disquietude."

"Nonsense, Annette!" exclaimed Alphonse, laughing, "you deal harshly with our host. I am sure I can see no harm in him; he is simply a pert, fidgety, inquisitive little busy-body, who, like most of his calling, contents himself with looking sharp after the main chance, and cares neither for republican nor royalist. To pay dearly for indifferent accommodation is the worst we may expect at his hands."

"I trust you may be right in your conjecture," replied Annette; and then as she saw her father's head beginning to droop on his chest, she rose and summoned the landlady, who presently appeared with lights in her hand, and the whole party forthwith repaired to the chambers prepared for them. Alphonse was the last to quit the supper-room, and just as he was about to follow his companions up the staircase that led direct from it, the landlady,

after looking cautiously round, came up to him, whispered in his ear "Beware!" and then hastily quitted the apartment.

"Beware!" The word was full of ominous significance, and tended, in some degree, to explain the secret of his host's familiar loquacity, which he had, at first, thought originated in nothing more than a petty feeling of inquisitiveness. But how was he to beware? What was the danger he was to guard against, and in what form was it to approach him? Fain would he have urged his monitor to speak more explicitly on the subject of her warning; but she was gone, and he did not know how to seek her out, without awakening her husband's distrust.

On entering the chamber assigned to him and Delille, the young man thought it the most prudent course he could adopt to say nothing, at present, to that gentleman, on the subject of his apprehensions; and when he saw him depositing his pistols on the first chair he happened to find vacant, as if he did not imagine he should have the slightest occasion for them, Alphonse merely waited till he was in bed and fast asleep, and then placed all the fire-arms close to his own side, so that he might know where to find them in case of emergency. He next threw himself dressed on his

couch, taking the precaution, however, of leaving the light burning, for as there were no fastenings to the crazy old door, he felt that he could not exercise too much vigilance.

But, beset as he was, with fears for the safety of his companions, and anxiously as he endeavoured to ward off the encroachments of the drowsy god, he could not resist his benumbing influence, and overpowered by the effects of his night walk, and the hearty meal, he at length dropped off into an uneasy slumber.

He woke unrefreshed, within an hour or two, and, on sitting up, found to his chagrin that the light was gone out and the room was in total darkness. His first impulse was to stretch out his hand and feel if the fire-arms were still in the chair beside him, and having satisfied himself that they were in the same place where he had deposited them, he next listened with intense avidity to ascertain if there were any sound or stir of life about him; but all was hushed and breathless, except the heavy breathing of Delille who slept in the adjoining bed.

While in this state of vigilance and anxiety, the young man imagined he heard the door of the supper-room, which he had so recently left, open gently, and a stealthy, cautious step ascend the

staircase that led to his dormitory. Could he be mistaken? He rubbed his eyes, half-doubting whether or not he were labouring under an attack of night-mare; and his heart beat fiercely, and every pulse in his veins throbbed almost to bursting, as he became more and more assured that the step was actually that of a living, moving person!

Grasping his pistols, he started up from his couch, irresolute whether or not to waken his slumbering neighbour, when, before he had time to decide on the course that was fittest to be pursued, a light glimmered through the chinks of the crazy door, and a gentle tap was heard outside.

On hastening to see who was the intruder, he found it was his landlady, who in a hasty anxious whisper said:

“Are your friends asleep?”

On being answered in the affirmative, she added:

“Follow me, then—but stay, your light is out, so you had better take mine, as you will have occasion for it;” and she gave him the lamp which she carried in her hand, and took his in exchange.

“Wherefore all this caution and mystery?” asked Alphonse, with a mingled expression of surprise and distrust in his countenance.

“Hush, not a word!” whispered the landlady; then, in low, stern, emphatic tones, that rung in his startled ear like a death-knell, she added: “your own life, and the lives of your friends, are in danger!” saying which she beckoned him to follow, and led the way to the furthest extremity of the passage that ran along the suite of rooms.

Here she halted, and again addressing Alphonse exclaimed:

“There are three ruffians below stairs, in the room where you supped, who at this very moment are meditating the project of your murder!”

“Good God! and have you not informed your husband of their intentions?” inquired Alphonse, eagerly.

“My husband!” exclaimed the woman, with an indignation which she had some difficulty in stifling, “the man, you allude to, is no husband of mine, though I am bound to him”—here she sighed deeply—“by ties which I cannot break but with life. He is one of a gang who have deserted from the republican army—mere cut-throat wretches from the faubourg St. Antoine—and who for some weeks past have, from time to time, made this house their head-quarters, whence they go forth to commit murder and robbery, which are secretly connived at by the landlord, who shares in

the spoil. I know not what course they have resolved on, as regards you and your companions, for I have not been admitted to their councils ; but as they have just sent me hither to ascertain whether you are asleep or not, I fear the worst, and take this opportunity of putting you on your guard."

" Three of them ? And well armed, you say ?"

" Yes."

" God of Heaven ! how shall I act ? Delille is a poor, nervous invalid, utterly useless in the event of an attack on us. How—how shall I act ?" the young man kept muttering to himself.

" I know not," replied the woman ; " you must be guided by circumstances. All I could do for you, and for that sweet young lady who is so kind to the unfortunate of her own sex, I have already done, having taken the precaution of leaving the front door, that leads into the road, unfastened, so that should events be in your favour, you have a good chance of escape in that direction. For the rest, you must consult your own judgment. Fortunately, the men below are hard drinkers, and as they have been on the prowl the whole day, it is by no means improbable that the air and the wine combined may have the effect of sending them to sleep in the midst of their debauch. When I go

down, therefore, do you follow me in a few minutes, and listen at the door to their consultations, for hearing from me that you are all fast asleep, they will naturally be less reserved in their remarks; and their decision will help to guide you to yours. The landlord will soon quit them, for he is as cowardly as he is cunning and avaricious; and when he goes, your chances will be more favourable, for he dare not, openly, take part with them, or even appear to have any knowledge of their schemes, lest he should rouse the suspicions of the neighbourhood, who at present respect him for his seeming openness and good-humour."

"Are there no means of escape but through the supper-room?" asked Alphonse.

"No," was the answer, "you cannot reach the front door but by passing through it."

"Then my hopes of escape are indeed but faint," exclaimed the young man, with a sigh. "Poor Annette!"

"Keep a good heart, Monsieur," replied his companion. "If you knew what I have gone through, you would not think your own case so sad a one; but I dare not remain with you any longer, or the wretches below will be suspecting that I have put you on your guard," and she hastily quitted his side, and descended the stairs.

The instant she was gone, Alphonse returned to his chamber, with a view to wake Annette and her father; on second thoughts, however, he deemed it the wisest course he could pursue, to delay disturbing them, till he could see his way more clearly, through the dreadful predicament in which he was placed; and depositing the light which the woman had given him, on the window-ledge, he stole softly, on tip-toe, down stairs to the door of the supper-room, which his friendly monitress had purposely left a-jar, in the hope that he might overhear enough of the villains' conversation to determine his line of proceeding.

"And so these guests of your's are no farmers at all, notwithstanding their assertions to the contrary?" exclaimed a gruff voice, not a little thickened with the strong, heady wine of the district.

"No more than I am," replied the landlord, whose sharp, chuckling tones the listener at once recognized. "There is no mistaking the broad, horny hand of a hard-working countryman of the Bocage; and I'll swear that these farmers, as they call themselves, have never yet handled spade or plough, except, perhaps, for mere amusement. As for the girl, she has the whitest and most delicate hand I ever saw, unused to work of any kind. And then her voice—"

“Ah, well, you need not describe it,” said another of the party, with a savage laugh; “we’ll hear it soon enough, I warrant.”

“I’ll tell you what it is,” continued the landlord, “these travellers are neither more nor less than disguised aristocrats, who have escaped from Nantes or its neighbourhood, and are now bound, like so many others of their class, for Jersey, or perhaps England. This is my firm belief. And I’m satisfied, also, that they carry a good round sum about them, for they would scarcely be such fools as to journey empty-handed. Now if, as I said awhile ago, we can contrive to relieve them of this cash, we shall be doing ourselves good, and benefitting the cause besides.”

“To be sure we shall,” observed a third speaker; “and the sooner we set about it the better. The party are all fast asleep, as Jeannette assured us; and what should prevent us from going quietly up”—here he lowered his voice to a whisper—“and cutting their throats! No fear of their doing us a mischief after that; for, as I heard Marat say, at the club, some months since, the dead can inflict no injury.”

Alphonse felt his flesh creep, as he listened to this atrocious proposition; but he was greatly relieved, when the landlord replied, in tones of

vexation : “ No such deed shall be perpetrated in this house. Remember, I have a character to lose.”

“ You,” exclaimed the first speaker, scornfully, “ you, a character to lose ! Do you forget how long we have known each other ? Remember the affair at the Tuileries, when we forced our way in with the people, and you found means in the confusion, to help yourself to some of the royal jewels. I say, Adolphe,” turning to his companions, “ our host here tells us he has a character to lose ! What will he tell us next, I wonder ?”

“ Why, I’ll say this,” returned the landlord, nettled, “ that no such deed as you contemplate shall be perpetrated under this roof. Can’t you see, yourself, the impolicy of such an act ? It would be sure to come to light, and then shunned and persecuted, as I should be, by all my neighbours, what assistance could I render you, in case of reverses ? There’s no knowing which way these disturbances will end, and it is advisable, therefore, that what we do, we should do cautiously, so as not to compromise ourselves, but to stand well with both parties, as I do at present.”

“ There’s some sense in what our host says,” exclaimed one of the ruffians. “ If we go too daringly to work, we shall soon make the country

too hot to hold us, besides losing the chance of many an easy good night's plunder. Let well alone, is my maxim. No one knows who we are now, or takes heed of our goings-on; but if once we commit such an act as you propose, we shall have the whole district on our trail, like so many bloodhounds. Already, there's quite enough uproar in the neighbourhood, without our increasing it."

"Well, if it must be so, it must," said the wretch who had first suggested the sanguinary proposition. "But never did I think that this landlord of ours, who stuck at nothing in the people's cause when at Paris, would now take fright at a few drops of blood, especially when drawn from aristocrats."

"You are a fool, Louis," replied the landlord, "and forget the vast difference of our position, here and in Paris. There, we had it all our own way, for the clubs and the municipality were both on the popular side; and if we did plunder and shed blood now and then, it was only revenging ourselves on the aristocrats, and there was no one to call us to account. But here, you will be pleased to bear in mind, that we are deserters from the army, doing business for ourselves, without the slightest regard to party considerations; consequently, should we happen to be discovered,

the republicans would show us no more mercy than the royalists."

"I begin to see now that you're right," said the ruffian who had been addressed as Adolphe; "but what other scheme do you recommend? I suppose you do not intend that our booty should escape us, now that it seems within our grasp?"

"Do you think I'm such a fool as that comes to?" rejoined the landlord. "No, no, I've a nice little plan of my own, and this is it—when the party leave the house to-morrow, I propose that you waylay them, on the heath beyond the village, which they must needs pass on their road to the coast; for there's a pool lies close to the spot I mean, which you will find very convenient for your purpose."

"But suppose there should happen to be travellers on the road, at the time they're passing?" said Adolphe.

"Why, then, it is but hanging at a distance on their track," observed the landlord, "till you find them alone; and you'll have plenty of opportunities in that solitary neighbourhood."

"They're well armed, you say," observed Adolphe.

"And what then?" rejoined the landlord. "There is but one among them who knows how to handle

his weapon like a man. As for the senior, he is a poor rickety creature, who is more likely to faint at the sound of fire-arms, than to use them in his own defence. And I suppose you're not afraid of the girl, eh?"

"If you give me any more of your sneers," said the half-drunken Adolphe, "I'll plaster this wall with your brains—I will, by God!"

"Come, come, no quarrelling," said another of the ruffians, "unless you wish to wake the sleepers, and so mar our plans. But, I say," he added, "wouldn't it be as well that one of us should go up and secure their arms so as to make all sure?"

"And how do you suppose I could justify myself when they woke in the morning, and taxed me with the robbery?" asked the landlord. "Let their weapons remain where they are, and do you act as I tell you. In justice to us all, it is absolutely necessary that I should not be compromised in the slightest degree, or appear to have the remotest knowledge of the plot. And, now, I shall leave you for the night; you'll scarcely want more drink than you've got on the table, and if you'll take my advice, you will try and clear your brains by a few hours sleep in your chairs, and at day-break, I will return and bring you round to the stables,

where you can secrete yourselves, till it is time to set out. Good-night."

When the landlord had quitted the room, the ruffians applied to the wine-jug with more frequency than ever; and after some further immaterial conversation, they all dropped off into a heavy, feverish slumber, overpowered by the fumes of liquor, and the exercise they had taken during the day.

All this while, Alphonse had been listening at the door, in a state of the most torturing suspense. During the earlier portions of the dialogue he had well-nigh abandoned himself to despair, but as he became better acquainted with the plans of his knavish landlord, he began to regain confidence; and when the fellow had retired, and the rest of the gang had—as it seemed to him—dropped off asleep, he again ascended the staircase in order to wake his companions and prepare them for the approaching crisis.

The chamber of Annette, as has already been observed, communicated with that which her father and Alphonse occupied, and as the door was without fastenings and merely closed, the young man was able to enter it without noise, which might have endangered the safety of them all. On approaching the bed, he found the sleeping girl lying on

her side with her head resting on her right arm. Her black, soft, sunny tresses were hanging loosely about her neck, and her snowy bosom, which was partially uncovered, the 'kerchief having been disturbed in the movements of slumber, heaved with a gentle respiration. Her gown—for she had not thrown off her clothes—was drawn up above the ankles, displaying their symmetrical turn and the exquisite proportions of the delicate little feet. The rosy flush of sleep was on her cheek; and round her parted lips, through which gleamed the small ivory teeth, played a smile of ineffable sweetness—a smile that might have become Ariadne, when first beheld by the Indian Bacchus reposing among the myrtle groves of Crete. Alphonse gazed, as though he would have gazed his whole soul away, at the enchanting sight, such a vision of exceeding innocence and loveliness his eyes had never yet rested on, and he almost shrunk from the idea of disturbing its peaceful beauty.

But circumstances were imperative; and gently bending over the slumbering girl, he touched her lightly on the shoulder, at the same time whispering in her ear: “Annette.”

In an instant she was awake, and starting up in affright, as she beheld a stranger standing with

a light in his hand by her side, she was about to utter a scream, when a second glance showed her who was the intruder, and raising herself up while a deep blush suffused her cheeks, she exclaimed : "Alphonse, how is this ? what is the matter ? My father ! Has any evil befallen him ?"

"Hush, Annette," whispered Alphonse, "do not speak so loud ; you must rise instantly, while I go and wake your father. This house is no longer safe for us ; we must quit it without a moment's delay."

"At this hour, Alphonse ? Gracious God ! what is the matter ?"

"You shall know presently, Annette ; but throw on your cloak, and get yourself ready for departure, while I return to your father's chamber."

But to wake Delille was a much more difficult task than to wake his daughter ; and when he was at length fully roused, and told that he must dress himself without delay, he was beset by the most nervous apprehensions, and Alphonse began to fear that he would be unable to go through the terrible ordeal that awaited him below stairs.

Just as Delille had completed his extempore toilette, his daughter entered from the adjoining chamber. Her face was pale, but her manner composed and tranquil ; for whatever terror she

might have felt, she had the prudence and self-command to conceal, well knowing how much her father's timidity would be increased by any appearance of emotion on her part. Alphonse did not leave his companions long in ignorance of the cause of his hasty summons, but having cautiously closed the door, he explained to them the nature of the discovery he had made, and the necessity that existed for their instantly leaving the *auberge*.

Annette acquiesced at once in the prudence of this step ; but Delille, irresolute as usual, expressed his repugnance to entering a room tenanted by armed ruffians, observing that the noise they made in passing through it would be sure to wake them, and then their certain death would be the consequence.

“ If we delay our departure till to-morrow,” he added, “ we shall surely be able to procure an escort in the next village, and so secure ourselves against attack.”

“ No, no,” replied Alphonse, “ we know not the strength of the republicans in this district. These ruffians may have confederates close by, and if so, rely on it they will not allow us to pass without a struggle, whose issue no man can foresee. Had we only our own safety to consult, Delille, I would not object to your scheme ; but remember your

daughter; think of the horrors to which she will be exposed, in the event of our fall, and for her sake be advised. Besides, who can guarantee our safety if we remain here till daybreak? Nothing is more likely than that these wretches, when they wake up from their debauch, forgetting or neglecting the landlord's advice, may decide on murdering us at once, and making their escape with their anticipated booty."

Subdued, but not convinced, by this reasoning, Delille was proceeding, in a distrustful tone, to offer further objections, when the kitchen-clock struck the hour of three.

"Three o'clock!" exclaimed Alphonse. "We have, then, not a moment to lose. Another hour, and all our precautions may be too late!"

"Do, pray, dearest papa," whispered Annette, beseechingly, "be persuaded. Alphonse says truly, we must quit the *auberge* this instant!"

"Be it as you will," said Delille, with a look of blank despondency, "I have nothing further to urge; I leave all in Alphonse's hands, and may God grant us a speedy deliverance!"

"Here are your pistols," exclaimed the young man, placing them in Delille's trembling hands. "Now, be sure you hold them in readiness to fire the instant I give the signal."

“ Dreadful alternative !” muttered Delille.

“ Do but keep up your self-possession,” said Alphonse, encouragingly, “ and all will yet be well. But beware that you make no false step, while descending the stairs, for a single lapse of that sort would inevitably be our destruction. Now, then, are you ready ?”

“ Yes !” was the agitated response.

The young man here addressed himself to Annette, observing :

“ Be sure you keep close to my side when we enter the supper-room, and remember that, however terrible the aspect of these wretches may be, they are no more formidable than mere phantoms, so long as their senses are locked up in sleep.”

Thus speaking, Alphonse quietly opened the door of the chamber, and the party prepared for their descent, leaving the light burning on the top step, so as to guide them down the stairs.

All was now perfectly still throughout the house, with the exception of the deep breathing of the sleepers, which the travellers could hear with terrible distinctness, as they approached the dreaded apartment where they had held their orgies. When they reached the door, Alphonse was about to throw it open, when Delille, who brought up the rear, became so overpowered with emotion, that

the young man thought he was going to faint, and stepping back, whispered in his ear :

“ For God’s sake, Delille, be a man, for not only your own life, but your daughter’s also, depends on your self-possession.”

With a desperate effort, Delille roused himself ; and Alphonse, accompanied by Annette, who clung close to him with one hand, while with the other she caught her father’s arm, entered the apartment.

Here a revolting spectacle was exhibited. The table was drenched with wine, and strewed with cups and jugs, which the ruffians had overturned in the progress of their debauch ; and the light, which was dim and wavering, threw a ghastly radiance on the faces of the sleepers, which were stamped with the impress of every evil passion, and wherein might be read as in a book, craft, cruelty, lust, and that dogged, brutal obstinacy which we so often find allied to such natures. It was evident at a glance, that they were not natives of La Vendée. Their squalid attire ; their black, unshorn chins ; their lank, ragged hair, falling down in straight masses behind, in true republican fashion ; their short, broad daggers, and clumsy pistols, which they wore in a greasy leathern belt, strapped tight round their waists ; and still

more, their tucked-up yellow shirt-sleeves, and brawny arms, spotted with mud and blood; all this convinced Alphonse that the prepossessing triumvirate before him were true Parisian *sans-culottes*, members of that amiable fraternity of which he had seen so many undesired samples on the fatal night of the capture of the Tuileries; and who had, doubtless, like hundreds of others of their class, enlisted as conscripts in the army of La Vendée, from no love of justice or freedom, but simply with a view to indulge in their favourite pastimes of robbery and murder. Two of the wretches were leaning back in their large, easy, black chairs; and the third, whose countenance exhibited a huge sabre scar that had gashed his upper lip and passed straight across his left cheek, terminating above the eye which it had narrowly missed, was resting his upturned face on his arms, which were placed on the table.

The travellers had advanced but a few feet into the room, when suddenly one of the ruffians stirred, and began to mutter incoherently in his dreams: "To his heart, Adolphe—strike right to his heart! What! afraid? I tell you the fellow's a rank aristocrat—down with him, then! Well aimed—another blow will finish him. See how his eye stiffens! Ay, he's quiet enough now!" And

the wretch gave a savage, exulting laugh in his sleep.

Alphonse instantly retreated to the door with his companions, where he waited a few minutes ; but hearing no further sounds or stir of life, he again advanced into the apartment. As the party moved stealthily forward step by step, Annette cast a hurried glance at the ruffians when she came opposite them, and then withdrew her gaze with a shudder ; while Alphonse, more composed, kept his eye constantly fixed on them, holding both pistols in his hands ready for action, at the slightest symptom of consciousness on the part of the sleepers. Annette's bearing was, on the whole, calm and collected, notwithstanding her trembling limbs, and the violent throbbing of her heart ; but Delille could not, with all his efforts, restrain the terrible apprehensions which assailed him. To his excited fancy, it seemed that death was visibly before him in its most appalling form ; and once as his gaze was rivetted, with a horrid fascination that he could not resist, on the faces of the sleepers, he imagined that he saw the eyes of one of them slowly open ; and impressed with this idea, his nerves became so unstrung that he lost all power of movement, and stood right opposite the ruffians, with his teeth chattering, his hair stiffened on his

forehead, and his face white as ashes. In vain his daughter, who feared even to whisper, attempted to drag him onward; consciousness seemed fast deserting him, and he would have fallen to the ground, had not Alphonse caught hold of him, and carried him forward, while Annette preceded them to the door, which was nearly opposite to the one at which they had entered. But this movement was not effected without some noise.

Hark! there is a sound—a stir! God of Heaven—one of the ruffians is beginning to awaken! “Is that you, Adolphe?” he drawled out, in a voice thick with sleep and drink.

It was one of those critical moments when mere courage is of no avail, and self-possession alone decides the fortune of the hour. Had Alphonse continued his move towards the door, the noise, however slight, would have been sure to have roused the half-awakened wretch to full consciousness, and a conflict would have commenced which would have flooded the room with the blood of the weaker party; but the young man stopped suddenly short, and fixed his keen glance on the disturbed ruffian, holding his pistol in such a position as to enable him to take a direct aim at his head. Thus he stood, calm, resolute, and prepared for the worst, while the stupified Delille

hung heavily on his left arm, and Annette, rent with a thousand distracting emotions, stood close behind him, not daring to cast a second glance towards the sleepers.

Again there was a slight stir, as the fellow, who had before spoken, lazily shifted his position. But after this, there was no further movement, for chained down by sleep as effectually as if his every limb were manacled, the wretch was as helpless and passive as an infant. Alphonse waited a minute or two to assure himself that such was really the case, and then turning round to Annette, and motioning her to precede him to the door, dragged forward the unresisting Delille; and in another instant the whole party were standing in the passage, into which the apartment they had just quitted opened.

The most dangerous part of their enterprize was now at an end; and heaving a profound sigh, as if a load were suddenly removed from his breast, Alphonse hurried along the passage, and uplifting the latch of the front door, which the considerate landlady had left a-jar, after carrying away the key with her, in case her distrustful partner should have taken a fancy to see to the fastenings himself, the travellers at

length found themselves standing once again in the open air !

“ Thank God ! ” exclaimed Annette, clasping her hands in ecstasy, “ we are safe from those monsters ! Oh, Alphonse—dear Alphonse ! what do we not owe to you ? How can we ever repay you for the services you have this night rendered us ? ”

“ Safe ! ” muttered Delille, now, for the first time, venturing to raise his drooping head, and look about him ; “ yes, yes, we are safe now—I feel that we are. But what a trial have we encountered ! My poor child, had those wretches but awoke—but my brain reels at the very thought—Alphonse, my son, you have been my saviour, and more than that, you have rescued Annette from a fate compared with which death would have been a blessing.”

“ Do not think of these things now, I conjure you,” replied the young man ; “ but let us proceed with all possible haste to the village below us, where we shall doubtless find shelter, unseasonable as is the hour. Are you equal to the fatigue of a brisk walk, or shall I support you ? ”

“ I’m well enough now,” rejoined Delille ; “ so, quick, let us move on, for we cannot too soon be clear of that stifling den.”

It was indeed a great change from the close, mephitic atmosphere of that dreaded apartment to the keen, fresh, frosty air of the early dawn, which acted as a wonderful restorative on the spirits of the party. A few streaks of grey glimmer were already beginning to be dimly visible in the east ; and the roads, dried by the frost, were hard and crisp, notwithstanding the heavy rain of the preceding night ; so that the travellers were enabled to pursue their way, without any further inconveniences, than what arose from their occasionally treading on the thin ice, which crusted every small watery rut and puddle in the path. Of course, at that early hour not a sign of animated life appeared ; a deep, solemn hush, as of the grave, was around ; the voices of the wind itself were still ; and it seemed as though, for a time there was a pause in the general action of creation. There is something very impressive to the fancy in the hour which immediately precedes sunrise. It belongs neither to day nor night, yet combines in some degree the character of both. If we happen to be abroad at this season, and find none stirring but ourselves, we seem to be alone in a dead unpeopled world, and either to have come into it before the rest of our species, or to have remained too long behind them.

As the party maintained a brisk pace, they were not long in reaching the straggling village of which Alphonse had spoken, and which indeed was little more than a mile distant from the *auberge*; and while they were looking about them for some farm-house of the better sort which might afford them suitable accommodation, Alphonse proposed that they should halt for a day or two, in order to throw the landlord and his confederates off the scent, who would naturally take for granted that they would resume their journey to the coast with as little delay as possible, and finding that they did not do so, would conclude that they had altered their plans and returned to the Bocage.

“The ruffians,” added the young man, “will never dream of looking for us here in their own immediate vicinity; and all we have to do, therefore, is to remain perfectly secluded for the time I mention, and then continue our route to the Isle of Noirmoutier.”

To this scheme Delille assented, observing, however, in his usual spirit of querulous despondency, that they could not calculate on the loyalty of the farmers and peasants in the district, and might possibly apply for shelter to one who was a republican instead of a royalist.

“We must take our chance of that,” rejoined

Alphonse, carelessly ; “ but for my own part, I have no sort of doubt or apprehension on the subject, for no decent farmer can possibly be a republican in a neighbourhood where republicanism has shown itself in so atrocious a form. But now to try the experiment, for here before us is a house where, if I mistake not, we shall find our few and moderate wants abundantly gratified.”

Alphonse was not disappointed in his expectations, for after duly explaining the cause of his intrusion at so unseasonable an hour, he and his fellow-travellers experienced the most hospitable reception from the farmer and all his family. The good woman rose instantly from her bed ; her two sons followed her example without the slightest hesitation ; and in a few minutes the party were seated beside a blazing turf fire with all the apparatus of a comfortable breakfast before them.

And now for the first time for many hours, Delille exhibited something like cheerfulness and buoyancy of manner, which increased almost to ecstacy when he heard from his host that Charette, with a large detachment of troops, was not more than eighteen miles distant from them, preparing to lay siege to Machecoul, which was in possession of a small republican force. Annette, delighted to see her father thus cheerful was hardly less excited ;

and the eyes of Alphonse flashed with a stern joy at the idea of soon again entering on the field of action. His evident animation, which in the impulse of the moment he never thought of restraining, was the only drawback to Annette's perfect happiness ; but when she looked at the young hero, and remembered how much he had done for herself and her father, she repressed all selfish considerations ; besides, she felt that he was still, and would be for some time yet, with her, so that on the whole, a happier party had seldom met under one roof.

In the course of the morning, Alphonse, fairly worn out by the harassing exertions of the thirty-six preceding hours, during which he had not had half an hour's sound sleep, but had kept all his faculties on the stretch, withdrew, at Delille's particular request, to snatch a brief repose ; and while he was absent, the former related to his host and his sons, all the circumstances of his adventures since he quitted Tiffauges : he described the blazing village, the catastrophe of the poor widow and her distracted child's murdered lover, and dwelt with special emphasis on the narrow escape they had had from assassination at the inn.

The worthy farmer, who was well-inclined to the cause of the Seigneurs, and whom the excesses of

the republicans had confirmed in that inclination, listened to Delille's details with breathless interest; but when he heard the narration of the landlord's double dealing, his indignation knew no bounds. Striking his brawny fist on the table :

“ This crafty villain then,” he furiously exclaimed, “ who has always led us to suppose that he was a peaceful, inoffensive individual, and took no part in our political disturbances, is in the secret of all the atrocities that have recently been perpetrated in the neighbourhood; and his *auberge*, no doubt, is the head-quarters of those who have perpetrated them. 'Tis well he is exposed in time, and that the remedy is in our own hands !”

“ Remedy !” said the pacific Delille, alarmed at the fierce energy of his host's manner, “ what remedy do you speak of ?”

“ The death—the instant death of the ruffians !” was the answer, delivered in that stern, deliberate tone of voice, which left no doubt of the speaker's earnestness.

“ Do not be rash !” replied Delille : “ crime cannot justify crime. If these men must be punished—and I am far from denying the necessity of making a signal example of them—do not you or your excited neighbours be their judges, but let

them be sent off as prisoners to Charette, who will know how to deal with them."

But the farmer's passions were too highly roused to permit him to listen to such tame, prudential advice.

"Neither Charette," he said, "nor any other man, were he the noblest Seigneur in La Vendée, shall stand between me and my vengeance."

"Your vengeance!" rejoined Delille, in what he intended to be a conciliatory tone. "My good friend, it is not you that have been injured. We are the party whose assassination was designed by the wretches; and if we are desirous that justice, rather than passion, should have a voice in the matter, surely you need not hesitate in making a sacrifice of your feelings, natural as I admit them to be."

"What!" exclaimed the farmer, "am I not injured when my friends and neighbours, among whom I have passed the happiest hours of my life, are daily exposed to the attacks of miscreants who regard neither man nor God? Am I not injured—injured, too, in my best and dearest feelings—when the country of my love and of my pride—the home of my fathers, and in whose bosom my own ashes will one day repose—is pillaged and laid waste and fired, and all but transferred into a howling wilder-

ness? Unworthy should I be of the name of man, did I not resent the wrongs of my neighbours as my own! And, by the living God! I will resent them, and this, ere the day is an hour older. I will root out the ruffians that infest the district. The blood of the murdered calls for vengeance, and they shall have it, let the republican authorities of Tiffauges say what they will!"

As he thus spoke, he abruptly quitted the apartment, and a few minutes afterwards Delille saw him proceeding with his sons, all armed with muskets, into the village, which lay a few yards in the rear.

Two hours elapsed, and then the results of the sturdy farmer's determination began to manifest themselves. Having dispatched his sons to some of the more resolute among the neighbours, who lived about half a mile off, he himself had entered the village, and having there gathered about him a band of stout confederates, he acquainted them with the atrocities which had been perpetrated but a day or two previously, with the sudden attack on a body of peasants while hearing mass in the fields, and the murder of one of the congregation, with the conflagration of an entire village, and the projected wholesale murder of some travellers who were at that moment under the shelter of his own roof.

In rude, touching language he painted the sad scene of anguish and insanity at the widow's cottage; he accused both himself and his excited hearers of having too long tamely submitted to republican violence; and when he had sufficiently roused their passions by his eloquence, which burned like fire into their hearts, he pointed to the inn on the high ground shelving down to the village, and told them, to their astonishment and horror, that that was the head-quarters of not a few of the marauders, and that the supposed in-offensive landlord was their spy and accomplice.

To paint the scene of rage, surprize, and confusion that followed this impassioned address of the farmer, is impossible; but when, himself leading the way, he called on his hearers to follow him to the miscreant's den, burn it to the ground, and take summary revenge on its inmates, not a man but instantly obeyed, with shouts of savage exultation; all thoughts but of a bloody retribution were forgotten in the wild excitement of the moment; and the whole party, armed with the first weapons they could lay hold of, rushed up the ascent whereon stood the devoted *auberge*. Whoever had beheld them, with their eyes flashing with a strange, unnatural light, their hair streaming loosely to the wind, and their teeth clenched with

desperate determination of purpose, must have fancied he beheld a body of raging madmen just escaped from durance.

On—on they rushed, and now having reached the *auberge*, the farmer, who took upon himself the direction of the party, commanded them to spread themselves round the house, so as effectually to beleague it, and cut off the inmates' chance of escape, while he, his sons, and one or two others burst in at the door.

The conscience-stricken landlord, who had not observed the avengers till they were within fifty yards of his dwelling, no sooner caught sight of them, than guessing at once the cause of their irruption, he rushed pale and ghastly into the room, which his confederates still occupied, and exclaimed: "Fly! save yourselves! you have not a moment to lose—the whole village is upon us!"

The ruffians, who were seated at breakfast, and had not yet recovered the effects of the night's debauch, started up at these words, and drawing forth their pistols, with hands shaking with fear and agitation, prepared for a desperate defence.

"Idiots—madmen!" exclaimed the distracted landlord; "resistance is of no earthly avail; for

there are at least ten to one against you. To the stables—quick! If you are caught here, your death is certain, and mine too! Fool that I was to allow you to remain so long! Away—away!” and, with frenzied gestures, he seized hold of the wretch nearest him.

At this critical moment, the farmer and his friends began thundering at the rickety door which yielded to their united strength. “All is over!” muttered the landlord, and leaving his bewildered confederates to their fate, he darted out of the room; but hardly had he time to cross the passage, when he was recognized by the farmer, who, seizing hold of him with an iron grasp, flung him out at the door among the peasantry, by whom he was instantly mangled with an infinite number of wounds, and trampled on, and trodden into the dust, till the very form of humanity was crushed out of his bleeding body!

The other wretches were by this time fully roused to a sense of their danger; and as the avengers burst into their apartment they discharged their pistols at them, and then drawing their swords, and standing close beside each other, prepared to defend themselves to the last extremity. But all their efforts were unavailing; their weapons, aimed at random, passed harmlessly over

the heads of their opponents, who bounding on them, like bloodhounds on their prey, beat down their guard, knocked the swords from their palsied hands, and in less than ten minutes all three lay weltering on the floor in their blood !

The villagers' next step was to set fire to the house, and a party of them rushing into the kitchen, broke up all the wooden chairs and tables they could find, and piled them in fragments on the floor, and then covering them with a heap of dry straw, they fired the whole mass ; and immediately it began to blaze they drew out portions of the ignited wood, and flinging it recklessly about them, the destructive element was soon raging in a dozen different places.

While this dreadful work of retribution was going forward, Alphonse, recruited by the three hours' slumber he had enjoyed, descended into the room where he had left his companions, when Delille, in an agitated manner, informed him of the events that had taken place during his brief absence, and expressed his conviction that the farmer, in his wrath, would not leave a soul alive in the *auberge*, not even the poor woman who had been their preserver.

"Impossible !" replied the young man ; "they would not surely harm a woman ! For the rest,

I interfere not in their behalf, for they have drawn their fate on themselves."

"But they will think the poor creature cognizant of her husband's misdeeds, and involve the innocent with the guilty," pursued Delille.

"True, most true: I never thought of that. She must be saved; yes, I will fly to her assistance," and before Delille could say a word in reply, the young man was off at his utmost speed towards the *auberge*.

The flames were now beginning to spread to every quarter of the house, and fanned by a brisk, dry, frosty wind, they became momentarily more furious. Thick volumes of smoke shot high up into the air, diffusing themselves over an airy reach of miles, while millions of fiery sparkles blazed forth with ineffable radiance; and at every fresh outbreak of the conflagration, which roared like a hurricane, the crowd, who were all gathered in front of the *auberge*, set up a terrific yell of exultation:

Just as Alphonse reached the scene of destruction, a woman appeared at an upper window, blazing all over with fire—a hideous spectacle!—and, with wild screams of agony, she besought the interference of the mob.

"Save me!—oh, God! save me!" she shrieked

out, holding forth her arms, along whose drapery the fire ran quivering: "I am burning from head to foot!—my very heart is scorched! Save me! save me!"

Horror-struck at this ghastly sight, Alphonse forced his way through the crowd, exclaiming, in his sternest tones of indignation and disgust: "For shame! Are you men?—are you Christians? Can you witness such a spectacle unmoved? Oh! do not make me blush for my countrymen, but help me to save her!"

But not a man stirred!

"Let her perish!" said the farmer, doggedly; "she is as guilty as the rest."

"'Tis false!" replied Alphonse, impetuously; "she it was who saved us, by informing us of the plot laid against our lives."

"Is this possible?" exclaimed the farmer; "she must indeed be rescued, then!" and following Alphonse, he darted into the blazing *auberge*.

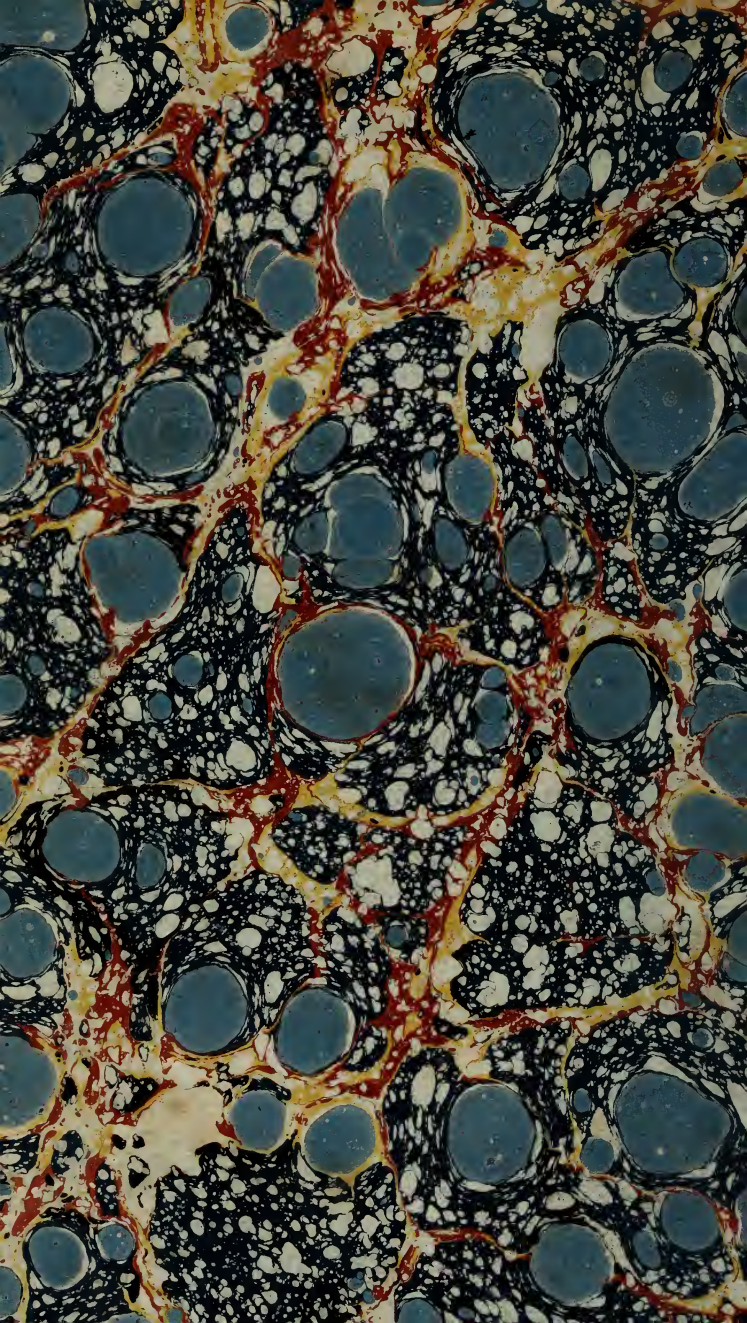
The above dialogue passed in less time than we have taken to relate it, and within five minutes from the first appearance of the wretched woman at the window, Alphonse, though half suffocated by the smoke, had nevertheless succeeded in forcing his way into her room, had caught her in his arms, all a-blaze as she was and delirious

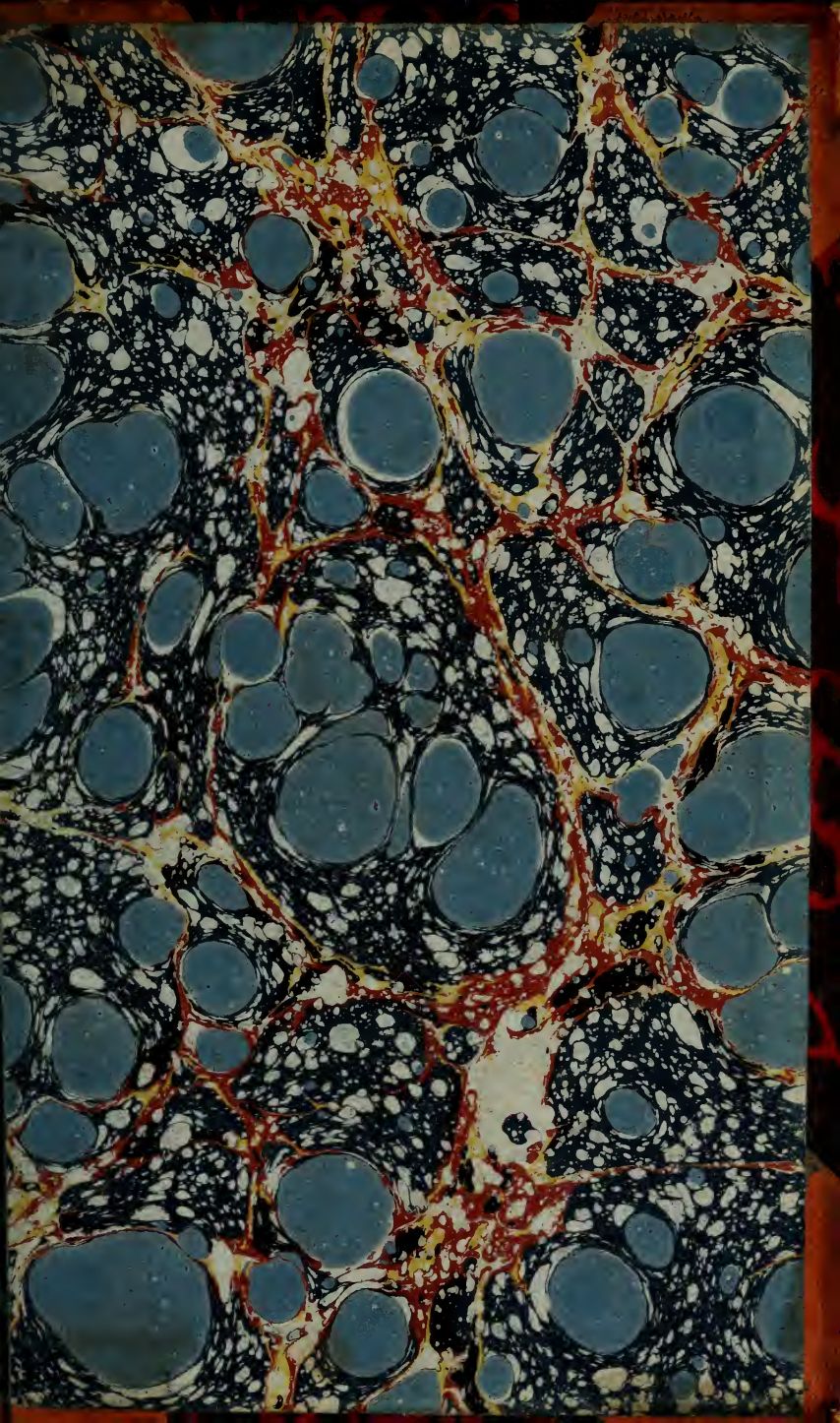
with agony, had descended the staircase in safety, and was already outside the door, when the roof fell in with a crash, and a fragment of one of the blazing beams striking him on the head, he dropped insensible, while, at the same instant, the woman for whose sake he had incurred this danger, fell from his arms a corpse! The farmer who, though he was close beside him, had providentially escaped without injury, immediately summoned some of the villagers to assist in bringing back the senseless youth to his house; and then the whole assembly, like the Edinburgh mob after the execution of Porteus, gradually melted away, and nought remained to show the dreadful tragedy that had been performed, but some fragments of blackened walls, and a mass of smouldering ashes.

END OF VOL. II.

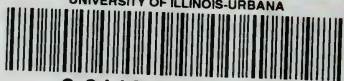
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